

FOLK TALES AND FANTASIES

A PD ANTHOLOGY



Deep Green, by Matt Pierard (copyright 2018)

HOW THE RIVERS WERE MADE.

Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman. And when they were quite old, the old woman said to her husband "How shall these our children get food when we are gone?" So the old man travelled afar to the great god Kuvera, [26] the god of riches, and, taking from him seedlings of paddy, pulse, mustard, and gourds, journeyed for eight days and so reached his home. And after staying a couple of days, he set forth to cultivate, taking dry food with him. And first he marked out a piece of rich land by placing boundaries on all four

sides of it, and so came home. And again he set out another day with hoe and axe, and cut and burned the jungle, and cleaned the soil, and after worshipping on each side of his field--on the east and on the west, on the north and on the south--he struck one blow with his hoe on each side.

And when all was ready, the old man planted his seedlings of various sorts, and finally went home and rested. And so, as time went by, the old woman desired vehemently to see how the crops were getting on. But the old man said "There is no water on the road, and if you grow athirst, you will get no relief." But she persisted and prevailed, and made her husband take her along. And as they went, and were now quite close to her husband's field, behold, the old woman began to be very thirsty. And the old man, being enraged, cried "What did I tell you? There is no water, and yet you would come." But she, being a woman, said "If you do not give me to drink, I shall die. So, water you must procure as best you can." So the old man, seeing no other way, went to seek for water. And after long search, seeing a tank, he bound the old woman's eyes with a cloth and dragged her to the water's edge and said to her "Drink if you will, but look not upon the tank." Now the ducks and other water fowls were playing in the water, and were making a merry noise, clacking and quacking. And, the old woman, being curious, like all her sex, peeped at them. And, seeing them at their play, she too desired to be happy in her husband's society, and, though he was very loth, prevailed with him. And so in due course there were born to them many sons and daughters. And then, in order to provide for their food, he journeyed to the Himalayas and digged a great tank, stocked with many kinds of fishes.

Now, one day the god Sri, the god of good luck, came that way with his white dog, ahunting for deer and hares and tortoises. And when he came to the margin of the tank, behold he was very thirsty. But when he stooped to drink, the fishes said to him eagerly that he must grant them a boon in return for their water. To which he assented, and when he had satisfied his thirst, the fishes said "Take us to the great river, the Brahmaputra (or Lohit)." So the god Sri tied them to his staff, and drew them after him, making runnels of water. And that is how the rivers were made. And the fishes in return gave him a pumpkin and a gourd. And, taking these with him to a friend's house, his friend regaled him with rice beer and pig's flesh, and in the morning he gave his friend the pumpkin. But when his friend cut open the pumpkin, it contained nothing but pure silver. So he bade the god Sri stay another day, and brewed fresh beer and killed another pig, and when he was going away gave him a flitch of bacon to take with him. So the god Sri gave him also the gourd. But when he cut open the gourd, it contained nothing but pure gold. And so the god Sri journeyed to his home. And when he got there, he found that his little daughter was very ill. And that was because he had given away the presents which the fishes had made him. But the fishes took pity

on him, and came to him in the guise of physicians, and told him that if he would worship and do sacrifice on the banks of rivers, then his daughter would be healed, which he did. And that is why we Kacharis worship rivers. And that is all.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of A Collection of Kachári Folk-Tales and Rhymes, by J. D. Anderson

THE JOVIAN JEST

By Lilith Lorraine_

[Sidenote: There came to our pigmy planet a radiant wanderer with a message--and a jest--from the vasty universe.]

Consternation reigned in Elsnore village when the Nameless Thing was discovered in Farmer Burns' corn-patch. When the rumor began to gain credence that it was some sort of meteor from inter-stellar space, reporters, scientists and college professors flocked to the scene, desirous of prying off particles for analysis. But they soon discovered that the Thing was no ordinary meteor, for it glowed at night with a peculiar luminescence. They also observed that it was practically weightless, since it had embedded itself in the soft sand scarcely more than a few inches.

By the time the first group of newspapermen and scientists had reached the farm, another phenomenon was plainly observable. The Thing was growing!

Farmer Burns, with an eye to profit, had already built a picket fence around his starry visitor and was charging admission. He also flatly refused to permit the chipping off of specimens or even the touching of the object. His attitude was severely criticized, but he stubbornly clung to the theory that possession is nine points in law.

* * * * *

It was Professor Ralston of Princewell who, on the third day after the fall of the meteor, remarked upon its growth. His colleagues crowded around him as he pointed out this peculiarity, and soon they discovered another factor--pulsation!

Larger than a small balloon, and gradually, almost imperceptibly expanding, with its viscid transparency shot through with opalescent lights, the Thing lay there in the deepening twilight and palpably shivered. As darkness descended, a sort of hellish radiance began to ooze from it. I say hellish, because there is no other word to

describe that spectral, sulphurous emanation.

As the hangers-on around the pickets shudderingly shrank away from the weird light that was streaming out to them and tinting their faces with a ghastly, greenish pallor, Farmer Burns' small boy, moved by some imp of perversity, did a characteristically childish thing. He picked up a good-sized stone and flung it straight at the nameless mass!

* * * * *

Instead of veering off and falling to the ground as from an impact with metal, the stone sank right through the surface of the Thing as into a pool of protoplasmic slime. When it reached the central core of the object, a more abundant life suddenly leaped and pulsed from center to circumference. Visible waves of sentient color circled round the solid stone. Stabbing swords of light leaped forth from them, piercing the stone, crumbling it, absorbing it. When it was gone, only a red spot, like a bloodshot eye, throbbed eerily where it had been.

Before the now thoroughly mystified crowd had time to remark upon this inexplicable disintegration, a more horrible manifestation occurred. The Thing, as though thoroughly awakened and vitalized by its unusual fare, was putting forth a tentacle. Right from the top of the shivering globe it pushed, sluggishly weaving and prescient of doom. Wavering, it hung for a moment, turning, twisting, groping. Finally it shot straight outward swift as a rattler's strike!

Before the closely packed crowd could give room for escape, it had circled the neck of the nearest bystander, Bill Jones, a cattleman, and jerked him, writhing and screaming, into the reddish core. Stupefied with soul-chilling terror, with their mass-consciousness practically annihilated before a deed with which their minds could make no association, the crowd could only gasp in sobbing unison and await the outcome.

* * * * *

The absorption of the stone had taught them what to expect, and for a moment it seemed that their worst anticipations were to be realised. The sluggish currents circled through the Thing, swirling the victim's body to the center. The giant tentacle drew back into the globe and became itself a current. The concentric circles merged--tightened--became one gleaming cord that encircled the helpless prey. From the inner circumference of this cord shot forth, not the swords of light that had powdered the stone to atoms, but myriads of radiant tentacles that gripped and cupped the body in a thousand places.

Suddenly the tentacles withdrew themselves, all save the ones that

grasped the head. These seemed to tighten their pressure--to swell and pulse with a grayish substance that was flowing from the cups into the cord and from the cord into the body of the mass. Yes, it was a grayish something, a smokelike Essence that was being drawn from the cranial cavity. Bill Jones was no longer screaming and gibbering, but was stiff with the rigidity of stone. Notwithstanding, there was no visible mark upon his body; his flesh seemed unharmed.

Swiftly came the awful climax. The waving tentacles withdrew themselves, the body of Bill Jones lost its rigidity, a heaving motion from the center of the Thing propelled its cargo to the surface--and Bill Jones stepped out!

Yes, he stepped out and stood for a moment staring straight ahead, staring at nothing, glassily. Every person in the shivering, paralysed group knew instinctively that something unthinkable had happened to him. Something had transpired, something hitherto possible only in the abysmal spaces of the Other Side of Things. Finally he turned and faced the nameless object, raising his arm stiffly, automatically, as in a military salute. Then he turned and walked jerkily, mindlessly, round and round the globe like a wooden soldier marching. Meanwhile the Thing lay quiescent--gorged!

* * * * *

Professor Ralston was the first to find his voice. In fact, Professor Ralston was always finding his voice in the most unexpected places. But this time it had caught a chill. It was trembling.

"Gentlemen," he began, looking down academically upon the motley crowd as though doubting the aptitude of his salutation. "Fellow-citizens," he corrected, "the phenomenon we have just witnessed is, to the lay mind, inexplicable. To me--and to my honorable colleagues (added as an afterthought) it is quite clear. Quite clear, indeed. We have before us a specimen, a perfect specimen, I might say, of a--of a--"

He stammered in the presence of the unnamable. His hesitancy caused the rapt attention of the throng that was waiting breathlessly for an explanation, to flicker back to the inexplicable. In the fraction of a second that their gaze had been diverted from the Thing to the professor, the object had shot forth another tentacle, gripping him round the neck and choking off his sentence with a horrid rasp that sounded like a death rattle.

Needless to say, the revolting process that had turned Bill Jones from a human being into a mindless automaton was repeated with Professor Ralston. It happened as before, too rapidly for intervention, too suddenly for the minds of the onlookers to shake off the paralysis of an unprecedented nightmare. But when the victim was

thrown to the surface, when he stepped out, drained of the grayish smokelike essence, a tentacle still gripped his neck and another rested directly on top of his head. This latter tentacle, instead of absorbing _from_ him, visibly poured into him what resembled a threadlike stream of violet light.

* * * * *

Facing the cowering audience with eyes staring glassily, still in the grip of the unknowable, Professor Ralston did an unbelievable thing. He resumed his lecture at the exact point of interruption! But he spoke with the tonelessness of a machine, a machine that pulsed to the will of a dictator, inhuman and inexorable!

"What you see before you," the Voice continued--the Voice that no longer echoed the thoughts of the professor--"is what you would call an amoeba, a giant amoeba. It is I--this amoeba, who am addressing you--children of an alien universe. It is I, who through this captured instrument of expression, whose queer language you can understand, am explaining my presence on your planet. I pour my thoughts into this specialised brain-box which I have previously drained of its meager thought-content." (Here the "honorable colleagues" nudged each other gleefully.) "I have so drained it for the purpose of analysis and that the flow of my own ideas may pass from my mind to yours unimpeded by any distortion that might otherwise be caused by their conflict with the thoughts of this individual.

"First I absorbed the brain-content of this being whom you call Bill Jones, but I found his mental instrument unavailable. It was technically untrained in the use of your words that would best convey my meaning. He possesses more of what you would call 'innate intelligence,' but he has not perfected the mechanical brain through whose operation this innate intelligence can be transmitted to others and, applied for practical advantage.

* * * * *

"Now this creature that I am using is, as you might say, full of sound without meaning. His brain is a lumber-room in which he has hoarded a conglomeration of clever and appropriate word-forms with which to disguise the paucity of his ideas, with which to express nothing! Yet the very abundance of the material in his storeroom furnishes a discriminating mind with excellent tools for the transportation of its ideas into other minds.

"Know, then, that I am not here by accident. I am a Space Wanderer, an explorer from a super-universe whose evolution has proceeded without variation along the line of your amoeba. Your evolution, as I perceive from an analysis of the brain-content of your professor, _began_ its

unfoldment in somewhat the same manner as our own. But in your smaller system, less perfectly adjusted than our own to the cosmic mechanism, a series of cataclysms occurred. In fact, your planetary system was itself the result of a catastrophe, or of what might have been a catastrophe, had the two great suns collided whose near approach caused the wrenching off of your planets. From this colossal accident, rare, indeed, in the annals of the stars, an endless chain of accidents was born, a chain of which this specimen, this professor, and the species that he represents, is one of the weakest links.

"Your infinite variety of species is directly due to the variety of adaptations necessitated by this train of accidents. In the super-universe from which I come, such derangements of the celestial machinery simply do not happen. For this reason, our evolution has unfolded harmoniously along one line of development, whereas yours has branched out into diversified and grotesque expressions of the Life-Principle. Your so-called highest manifestation of this principle, namely, your own species, is characterized by a great number of specialized organs. Through this very specialization of functions, however, you have forfeited your individual immortality, and it has come about that only your life-stream is immortal. The primal cell is inherently immortal, but death follows in the wake of specialization.

* * * * *

"We, the beings of this amoeba universe, are individually immortal. We have no highly specialized organs to break down under the stress of environment. When we want an organ, we create it. When it has served its purpose, we withdraw it into ourselves. We reach out our tentacles and draw to ourselves whatsoever we desire. Should a tentacle be destroyed, we can put forth another.

"Our universe is beautiful beyond the dreams of your most inspired poets. Whereas your landscapes, though lovely, are stationary, unchangeable except through herculean efforts, ours are Protean, eternally changing. With our own substance, we build our minarets of light, piercing the aura of infinity. At the bidding of our wills we create, preserve, destroy--only to build again more gloriously.

"We draw our sustenance from the primates, as do your plants, and we constantly replace the electronic base of these primates with our own emanations, in much the same manner as your nitrogenous plants revitalize your soil.

"While we create and withdraw organs at will, we have nothing to correspond to your five senses. We derive knowledge through one sense only, or, shall I say, a super-sense? We see and hear and touch and taste and smell and feel and know, not through any one organ, but

through our whole structure. The homogeneous force of our omni-substance subjects the plural world to the processing of a powerful unity.

* * * * *

"We can dissolve our bodies at will, retaining only the permanent atom of our being, the seed of life dropped on the soil of our planet by Infinite Intelligence. We can propel this indestructible seed on light rays through the depths of space. We can visit the farthest universe with the velocity of light, since light is our conveyance. In reaching your little world, I have consumed a million years, for my world is a million light-years distant: yet to my race a million years is as one of your days.

"On arrival at any given destination, we can build our bodies from the elements of the foreign planet. We attain our knowledge of conditions on any given planet by absorbing the thought-content of the brains of a few representative members of its dominant race. Every well-balanced mind contains the experience of the race, the essence of the wisdom that the race-soul has gained during its residence in matter. We make this knowledge a part of our own thought-content, and thus the Universe lies like an open book before us.

"At the end of a given experiment in thought absorption, we return the borrowed mind-stuff to the brain of its possessor. We reward our subject for his momentary discomfiture by pouring into his body our splendid vitality. This lengthens his life expectancy immeasurably, by literally burning from his system the germs of actual or incipient ills that contaminate the blood-stream.

* * * * *

"This, I believe, will conclude my explanation, an explanation to which you, as a race in whom intelligence is beginning to dawn, are entitled. But you have a long road to travel yet. Your thought-channels are pitifully blocked and criss-crossed with nonsensical and inhibitory complexes that stand in the way of true progress. But you will work this out, for the Divine Spark that pulses through us of the Larger Universe, pulses also through you. That spark, once lighted, can never be extinguished, can never be swallowed up again in the primeval slime.

"There is nothing more that I can learn from you--nothing that I can teach you at this stage of your evolution. I have but one message to give you, one thought to leave with you--forge on! You are on the path, the stars are over you, their light is flashing into your souls the slogan of the Federated Suns beyond the frontiers of your little warring worlds. Forge on!"

The Voice died out like the chiming of a great bell receding into immeasurable distance. The supercilious tones of the professor had yielded to the sweetness and the light of the Greater Mind whose instrument he had momentarily become. It was charged at the last with a golden resonance that seemed to echo down vast spaceless corridors beyond the furthestmost outposts of time.

* * * *

As the Voice faded out into a sacramental silence, the strangely assorted throng, moved by a common impulse, lowered their heads as though in prayer. The great globe pulsed and shimmered throughout its sentient depths like a sea of liquid jewels. Then the tentacle that grasped the professor drew him back toward the scintillating nucleus. Simultaneously another arm reached out and grasped Bill Jones, who, during the strange lecture, had ceased his wooden soldier marching and had stood stiffly at attention.

The bodies of both men within the nucleus were encircled once more by the single current. From it again put forth the tentacles, cupping their heads, but the smokelike essence flowed back to them this time, and with it flowed a tiny threadlike stream of violet light. Then came the heaving motion when the shimmering currents caught the two men and tossed them forth unharmed but visibly dowered with the radiance of more abundant life. Their faces were positively glowing and their eyes were illuminated by a light that was surely not of earth.

Then, before the very eyes of the marveling people, the great globe began to dwindle. The jeweled lights intensified, concentrated, merged, until at last remained only a single spot no larger than a pin-head, but whose radiance was, notwithstanding, searing, excruciating. Then the spot leaped up--up into the heavens, whirling, dipping and circling as in a gesture of farewell, and finally soaring into invisibility with the blinding speed of light.

* * * *

The whole wildly improbable occurrence might have been dismissed as a queer case of mass delusion, for such cases are not unknown to history, had it not been followed by a convincing aftermath.

The culmination of a series of startling coincidences, both ridiculous and tragic, at last brought men face to face with an incontestable fact: namely, that Bill Jones had emerged from his fiery baptism endowed with the thought-expressing facilities of Professor Ralston, while the professor was forced to struggle along with the meager educational appliances of Bill Jones!

In this ironic manner the Space-Wanderer had left unquestionable proof

of his visit by rendering a tribute to "innate intelligence" and playing a Jovian Jest upon an educated fool--a neat transposition.

A Columbus from a vaster, kindlier universe had paused for a moment to learn the story of our pigmy system. He had brought us a message from the outermost citadels of life and had flashed out again on his aeonic voyage from everlasting unto everlasting.

FOR VACATION ADVENTURERS

Truth is stranger than fiction. Ask the Regular Army man who has soldiered in the far-off corners of the earth, gone "over the top" in action, and has experienced the thrill of service in the tropics or the sub-arctic.

Better yet, get an earful of real Astounding Stories yourself, at first hand this summer, as one of the thirty thousand young men between the ages of seventeen and twenty-four enjoying those thirty glorious days and nights as a student-camper at one of Uncle Sam's Citizens' Military Training Camps.

All of these Camps are pitched at Regular Army posts, and it is the custom for grizzled old-timers who have followed the Flag for many long years to drift down to "the boys" around campfire time each night and regale the student campers with thrilling, real life yarns of action and adventure in many strange and unusual circumstances.

It is not necessary for one to be a rich man's son in order to enjoy the manifold benefits of their Camps. Uncle Sam pays all the necessary bills including transportation, the best of food, bedding, laundry service and medical treatment if needed. And there is no obligation for future military service entailed by attendance at any of these Nation-wide CMT camps. Their primary mission is the upbuilding of American youth in health and good citizenship.

Detailed information, together with illustrated literature about the Citizens' Military Training Camp, may be obtained by addressing the CMTC Officer at the U.S. Army post nearest your home.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Astounding Stories of Super-Science*, May, 1930, by Various

MOXON'S MASTER

"Are you serious?--do you really believe that a machine thinks?"

I got no immediate reply; Moxon was apparently intent upon the coals in the grate, touching them deftly here and there with the fire-poker till they signified a sense of his attention by a brighter glow. For several weeks I had been observing in him a growing habit of delay in answering even the most trivial of commonplace questions. His air, however, was that of preoccupation rather than deliberation: one might have said that he had "something on his mind."

Presently he said:

"What is a 'machine'? The word has been variously defined. Here is one definition from a popular dictionary: 'Any instrument or organization by which power is applied and made effective, or a desired effect produced.' Well, then, is not a man a machine? And you will admit that he thinks--or thinks he thinks."

"If you do not wish to answer my question," I said, rather testily, "why not say so?--all that you say is mere evasion. You know well enough that when I say 'machine' I do not mean a man, but something that man has made and controls."

"When it does not control him," he said, rising abruptly and looking out of a window, whence nothing was visible in the blackness of a stormy night. A moment later he turned about and with a smile said: "I beg your pardon; I had no thought of evasion. I considered the dictionary man's unconscious testimony suggestive and worth something in the discussion. I can give your question a direct answer easily enough: I do believe that a machine thinks about the work that it is doing."

That was direct enough, certainly. It was not altogether pleasing, for it tended to confirm a sad suspicion that Moxon's devotion to study and work in his machine-shop had not been good for him. I knew, for one thing, that he suffered from insomnia, and that is no light affliction. Had it affected his mind? His reply to my question seemed to me then evidence that it had; perhaps I should think differently about it now. I was younger then, and among the blessings that are not denied to youth is ignorance. Incited by that great stimulant to controversy, I said:

"And what, pray, does it think with--in the absence of a brain?"

The reply, coming with less than his customary delay, took his favorite form of counter-interrogation:

"With what does a plant think--in the absence of a brain?"

"Ah, plants also belong to the philosopher class! I should be pleased to know some of their conclusions; you may omit the premises."

"Perhaps," he replied, apparently unaffected by my foolish irony, "you may be able to infer their convictions from their acts. I will spare you the familiar examples of the sensitive mimosa, the several insectivorous flowers and those whose stamens bend down and shake their pollen upon the entering bee in order that he may fertilize their distant mates. But observe this. In an open spot in my garden I planted a climbing vine. When it was barely above the surface I set a stake into the soil a yard away. The vine at once made for it, but as it was about to reach it after several days I removed it a few feet. The vine at once altered its course, making an acute angle, and again made for the stake. This manoeuvre was repeated several times, but finally, as if discouraged, the vine abandoned the pursuit and ignoring further attempts to divert it traveled to a small tree, further away, which it climbed.

"Roots of the eucalyptus will prolong themselves incredibly in search of moisture. A well-known horticulturist relates that one entered an old drain pipe and followed it until it came to a break, where a section of the pipe had been removed to make way for a stone wall that had been built across its course. The root left the drain and followed the wall until it found an opening where a stone had fallen out. It crept through and following the other side of the wall back to the drain, entered the unexplored part and resumed its journey."

"And all this?"

"Can you miss the significance of it? It shows the consciousness of plants. It proves that they think."

"Even if it did--what then? We were speaking, not of plants, but of machines. They may be composed partly of wood--wood that has no longer vitality--or wholly of metal. Is thought an attribute also of the mineral kingdom?"

"How else do you explain the phenomena, for example, of crystallization?"

"I do not explain them."

"Because you cannot without affirming what you wish to deny, namely, intelligent cooperation among the constituent elements of the crystals. When soldiers form lines, or hollow squares, you call it reason. When wild geese in flight take the form of a letter V you say instinct. When the homogeneous atoms of a mineral, moving freely in solution, arrange themselves into shapes mathematically perfect,

or particles of frozen moisture into the symmetrical and beautiful forms of snowflakes, you have nothing to say. You have not even invented a name to conceal your heroic unreason."

Moxon was speaking with unusual animation and earnestness. As he paused I heard in an adjoining room known to me as his "machine-shop," which no one but himself was permitted to enter, a singular thumping sound, as of some one pounding upon a table with an open hand. Moxon heard it at the same moment and, visibly agitated, rose and hurriedly passed into the room whence it came. I thought it odd that any one else should be in there, and my interest in my friend--with doubtless a touch of unwarrantable curiosity--led me to listen intently, though, I am happy to say, not at the keyhole. There were confused sounds, as of a struggle or scuffle; the floor shook. I distinctly heard hard breathing and a hoarse whisper which said "Damn you!" Then all was silent, and presently Moxon reappeared and said, with a rather sorry smile:

"Pardon me for leaving you so abruptly. I have a machine in there that lost its temper and cut up rough."

Fixing my eyes steadily upon his left cheek, which was traversed by four parallel excoriations showing blood, I said:

"How would it do to trim its nails?"

I could have spared myself the jest; he gave it no attention, but seated himself in the chair that he had left and resumed the interrupted monologue as if nothing had occurred:

"Doubtless you do not hold with those (I need not name them to a man of your reading) who have taught that all matter is sentient, that every atom is a living, feeling, conscious being. I do. There is no such thing as dead, inert matter: it is all alive; all instinct with force, actual and potential; all sensitive to the same forces in its environment and susceptible to the contagion of higher and subtler ones residing in such superior organisms as it may be brought into relation with, as those of man when he is fashioning it into an instrument of his will. It absorbs something of his intelligence and purpose--more of them in proportion to the complexity of the resulting machine and that of its work.

"Do you happen to recall Herbert Spencer's definition of 'Life'? I read it thirty years ago. He may have altered it afterward, for anything I know, but in all that time I have been unable to think of a single word that could profitably be changed or added or removed. It seems to me not only the best definition, but the only possible one.

"'Life,' he says, 'is a definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences.'"

"That defines the phenomenon," I said, "but gives no hint of its cause."

"That," he replied, "is all that any definition can do. As Mill points out, we know nothing of cause except as an antecedent--nothing of effect except as a consequent. Of certain phenomena, one never occurs without another, which is dissimilar: the first in point of time we call cause, the second, effect. One who had many times seen a rabbit pursued by a dog, and had never seen rabbits and dogs otherwise, would think the rabbit the cause of the dog.

"But I fear," he added, laughing naturally enough, "that my rabbit is leading me a long way from the track of my legitimate quarry: I'm indulging in the pleasure of the chase for its own sake. What I want you to observe is that in Herbert Spencer's definition of 'life' the activity of a machine is included--there is nothing in the definition that is not applicable to it. According to this sharpest of observers and deepest of thinkers, if a man during his period of activity is alive, so is a machine when in operation. As an inventor and constructor of machines I know that to be true."

Moxon was silent for a long time, gazing absently into the fire. It was growing late and I thought it time to be going, but somehow I did not like the notion of leaving him in that isolated house, all alone except for the presence of some person of whose nature my conjectures could go no further than that it was unfriendly, perhaps malign. Leaning toward him and looking earnestly into his eyes while making a motion with my hand through the door of his workshop, I said:

"Moxon, whom have you in there?"

Somewhat to my surprise he laughed lightly and answered without hesitation:

"Nobody; the incident that you have in mind was caused by my folly in leaving a machine in action with nothing to act upon, while I undertook the interminable task of enlightening your understanding. Do you happen to know that Consciousness is the creature of Rhythm?"

"O bother them both!" I replied, rising and laying hold of my overcoat. "I'm going to wish you good night; and I'll add the hope that the machine which you inadvertently left in action will have her gloves on the next time you think it needful to stop her."

Without waiting to observe the effect of my shot I left the house.

Rain was falling, and the darkness was intense. In the sky beyond the crest of a hill toward which I groped my way along precarious plank sidewalks and across miry, unpaved streets I could see the faint glow of the city's lights, but behind me nothing was visible but a single window of Moxon's house. It glowed with what seemed to me a mysterious and fateful meaning. I knew it was an uncurtained aperture in my friend's "machine-shop," and I had little doubt that he had resumed the studies interrupted by his duties as my instructor in mechanical consciousness and the fatherhood of Rhythm. Odd, and in some degree humorous, as his convictions seemed to me at that time, I could not wholly divest myself of the feeling that they had some tragic relation to his life and character--perhaps to his destiny--although I no longer entertained the notion that they were the vagaries of a disordered mind. Whatever might be thought of his views, his exposition of them was too logical for that. Over and over, his last words came back to me: "Consciousness is the creature of Rhythm." Bald and terse as the statement was, I now found it infinitely alluring. At each recurrence it broadened in meaning and deepened in suggestion. Why, here, (I thought) is something upon which to found a philosophy. If consciousness is the product of rhythm all things ARE conscious, for all have motion, and all motion is rhythmic. I wondered if Moxon knew the significance and breadth of his thought--the scope of this momentous generalization; or had he arrived at his philosophic faith by the tortuous and uncertain road of observation?

That faith was then new to me, and all Moxon's expounding had failed to make me a convert; but now it seemed as if a great light shone about me, like that which fell upon Saul of Tarsus; and out there in the storm and darkness and solitude I experienced what Lewes calls "The endless variety and excitement of philosophic thought." I exulted in a new sense of knowledge, a new pride of reason. My feet seemed hardly to touch the earth; it was as if I were uplifted and borne through the air by invisible wings.

Yielding to an impulse to seek further light from him whom I now recognized as my master and guide, I had unconsciously turned about, and almost before I was aware of having done so found myself again at Moxon's door. I was drenched with rain, but felt no discomfort. Unable in my excitement to find the doorbell I instinctively tried the knob. It turned and, entering, I mounted the stairs to the room that I had so recently left. All was dark and silent; Moxon, as I had supposed, was in the adjoining room--the "machine-shop." Groping along the wall until I found the communicating door I knocked loudly several times, but got no response, which I attributed to the uproar outside, for the wind was blowing a gale and dashing the rain against the thin walls in sheets. The drumming upon the shingle roof spanning the unceiled room was loud and incessant.

I had never been invited into the machine-shop--had, indeed, been denied admittance, as had all others, with one exception, a skilled metal worker, of whom no one knew anything except that his name was Haley and his habit silence. But in my spiritual exaltation, discretion and civility were alike forgotten and I opened the door. What I saw took all philosophical speculation out of me in short order.

Moxon sat facing me at the farther side of a small table upon which a single candle made all the light that was in the room. Opposite him, his back toward me, sat another person. On the table between the two was a chessboard; the men were playing. I knew little of chess, but as only a few pieces were on the board it was obvious that the game was near its close. Moxon was intensely interested--not so much, it seemed to me, in the game as in his antagonist, upon whom he had fixed so intent a look that, standing though I did directly in the line of his vision, I was altogether unobserved. His face was ghastly white, and his eyes glittered like diamonds. Of his antagonist I had only a back view, but that was sufficient; I should not have cared to see his face.

He was apparently not more than five feet in height, with proportions suggesting those of a gorilla--a tremendous breadth of shoulders, thick, short neck and broad, squat head, which had a tangled growth of black hair and was topped with a crimson fez. A tunic of the same color, belted tightly to the waist, reached the seat--apparently a box--upon which he sat; his legs and feet were not seen. His left forearm appeared to rest in his lap; he moved his pieces with his right hand, which seemed disproportionately long.

I had shrunk back and now stood a little to one side of the doorway and in shadow. If Moxon had looked farther than the face of his opponent he could have observed nothing now, except that the door was open. Something forbade me either to enter or to retire, a feeling--I know not how it came--that I was in the presence of an imminent tragedy and might serve my friend by remaining. With a scarcely conscious rebellion against the indelicacy of the act I remained.

The play was rapid. Moxon hardly glanced at the board before making his moves, and to my unskilled eye seemed to move the piece most convenient to his hand, his motions in doing so being quick, nervous and lacking in precision. The response of his antagonist, while equally prompt in the inception, was made with a slow, uniform, mechanical and, I thought, somewhat theatrical movement of the arm, that was a sore trial to my patience. There was something unearthly about it all, and I caught myself shuddering. But I was wet and cold.

Two or three times after moving a piece the stranger slightly inclined his head, and each time I observed that Moxon shifted his king. All at once the thought came to me that the man was dumb. And then that he was a machine--an automaton chess-player! Then I remembered that Moxon had once spoken to me of having invented such a piece of mechanism, though I did not understand that it had actually been constructed. Was all his talk about the consciousness and intelligence of machines merely a prelude to eventual exhibition of this device--only a trick to intensify the effect of its mechanical action upon me in my ignorance of its secret?

A fine end, this, of all my intellectual transports--my "endless variety and excitement of philosophic thought!" I was about to retire in disgust when something occurred to hold my curiosity. I observed a shrug of the thing's great shoulders, as if it were irritated: and so natural was this--so entirely human--that in my new view of the matter it startled me. Nor was that all, for a moment later it struck the table sharply with its clenched hand. At that gesture Moxon seemed even more startled than I: he pushed his chair a little backward, as in alarm.

Presently Moxon, whose play it was, raised his hand high above the board, pounced upon one of his pieces like a sparrow-hawk and with the exclamation "checkmate!" rose quickly to his feet and stepped behind his chair. The automaton sat motionless.

The wind had now gone down, but I heard, at lessening intervals and progressively louder, the rumble and roll of thunder. In the pauses between I now became conscious of a low humming or buzzing which, like the thunder, grew momentarily louder and more distinct. It seemed to come from the body of the automaton, and was unmistakably a whirring of wheels. It gave me the impression of a disordered mechanism which had escaped the repressive and regulating action of some controlling part--an effect such as might be expected if a pawl should be jostled from the teeth of a ratchet-wheel. But before I had time for much conjecture as to its nature my attention was taken by the strange motions of the automaton itself. A slight but continuous convulsion appeared to have possession of it. In body and head it shook like a man with palsy or an ague chill, and the motion augmented every moment until the entire figure was in violent agitation. Suddenly it sprang to its feet and with a movement almost too quick for the eye to follow shot forward across table and chair, with both arms thrust forth to their full length--the posture and lunge of a diver. Moxon tried to throw himself backward out of reach, but he was too late: I saw the horrible thing's hands close upon his throat, his own clutch its wrists. Then the table was overturned, the candle thrown to the floor and extinguished, and all was black dark. But the noise of the struggle was dreadfully distinct, and most terrible of all were the raucous, squawking sounds

made by the strangled man's efforts to breathe. Guided by the infernal hubbub, I sprang to the rescue of my friend, but had hardly taken a stride in the darkness when the whole room blazed with a blinding white light that burned into my brain and heart and memory a vivid picture of the combatants on the floor, Moxon underneath, his throat still in the clutch of those iron hands, his head forced backward, his eyes protruding, his mouth wide open and his tongue thrust out; and--horrible contrast!--upon the painted face of his assassin an expression of tranquil and profound thought, as in the solution of a problem in chess! This I observed, then all was blackness and silence.

Three days later I recovered consciousness in a hospital. As the memory of that tragic night slowly evolved in my ailing brain recognized in my attendant Moxon's confidential workman, Haley. Responding to a look he approached, smiling.

"Tell me about it," I managed to say, faintly--"all about it."

"Certainly," he said; "you were carried unconscious from a burning house--Moxon's. Nobody knows how you came to be there. You may have to do a little explaining. The origin of the fire is a bit mysterious, too. My own notion is that the house was struck by lightning."

"And Moxon?"

"Buried yesterday--what was left of him."

Apparently this reticent person could unfold himself on occasion. When imparting shocking intelligence to the sick he was affable enough. After some moments of the keenest mental suffering I ventured to ask another question:

"Who rescued me?"

"Well, if that interests you--I did."

"Thank you, Mr. Haley, and may God bless you for it. Did you rescue, also, that charming product of your skill, the automaton chess-player that murdered its inventor?"

The man was silent a long time, looking away from me. Presently he turned and gravely said:

"Do you know that?"

"I do," I replied; "I saw it done."

That was many years ago. If asked to-day I should answer less confidently.

The Project Gutenberg Etext of *Can Such Things Be?*, by Ambrose Bierce

KING BIBBS.

By James Albery.

"It's all through that Liberal Government."

These were the words uttered by King Bibbs as he stood in the rain without an umbrella; and it was not the first time he had uttered them.

Think of it! There stood King Bibbs in the rain without an umbrella.

Once upon a time King Bibbs had a beautiful palace; but there came a Liberal Government, and they promised the nation economy.

Their policy was to save and censure, to cut down everything they did pay for, and to cut up everything they did not.

They contracted that every soldier in the army should have one nail less in his boots, and they blamed the last Government for not having soldiers who required no boots at all. They arranged that the royal charwomen should clean the floors of the Government offices with soap without sand or with sand without soap; and they censured the late Government for having floors that wanted any cleaning. They cut down the amount and the quality of the cheese required for the royal mousetraps, and they pointed out to a plundered people that the last Government were entirely to blame for there being any mice. They voted that the royal weather-cock on the national stable should be re-gilt only once in six years, instead of once in five, and they made it clear, at least to their own party, that it was entirely owing to the tactics of the late Government that weather-cocks were required at all; and it must be admitted that upon this point the late Government were a little bit with them.

It was a _fine time_, and the nation that King Bibbs reigned over might well feel proud.

They did.

But you know that if you keep the stove going by what you can spare from your household furniture, the time will come when you will be a little at a loss for firewood.

What would you do? You cannot part with the comfortable chair you sit in, and your friends must have their little places; so very likely, if you had no respect for time-honoured things, you would break up some grand old cabinet that your forefathers loved, but that to you appeared useless, and so you'd keep the stove going. And as long as the fire lasted, you and your friends would be warm and snug in your places.

That's just what our Government did--not ours, of course--but the one I am talking of.

They turned their eyes on the king's palace, and they said the nation cannot be saddled with this expense.

They had already saved the nation about a farthing per head per annum, and this new sacrifice would save about an eighth as much more. But you must understand that every man looked at the amount saved in the lump; he never thought of the farthing that was put in his pocket in return for the time he wasted in attending public meetings, but had a vague idea that the golden thousands talked of were in some remote way his rescued property.

What a splendid show of justice, wasn't it now, when bills were plastered all over King Bibbs's palace, to say those desirable premises would be sold by public auction on such a date?

It touched the people to the core; they gave up half a day to flock round the palace, and read the bills; they lost another half-day's work to see the palace sold; they spent a day's wages to get drunk to celebrate this crowning stroke of economy, and in their wild delight at the justice done them, they quite forgot to bank the one-eighth of a farthing which the generous Government had put into their pockets.

How common it is to say, we go from bad to worse, and on that principle I suppose it was that this Liberal Government went from good to better.

If it was good that the poor king should give up his palace and live like a private gentleman, would it not be better that he should go a grade lower, and live like a retired tradesman?

The odd fact was, that the more they stripped poor King Bibbs of the sacred paraphernalia that once adorned his life, the more useless he appeared in the eyes of his subjects; and he was cut down from a palace to a mansion, and from a mansion to a villa; from having one hundred horses to ten; and from ten to none. And so it was that King Bibbs came to be walking in the rain without an umbrella; and so it was, as he reflected on the past he exclaimed,--

"It's all through that Liberal Government."

His most gracious Majesty had been to the reading-rooms to look at the morning papers, and see what his Government were doing. It may seem wrong that he should thus waste a penny; but remember, it was his duty to see how his people were getting on. As he left the rooms there was a quiet, sad smile on the king's face.

"Ah," he muttered, "my prime minister is very clever, but he is all ambition and vanity; he tries to sail the ship with nothing but flags. I do wish he would take in the bunting and put out some canvas, so that we might have a little real progress instead of so much show."

At this time he was just turning the corner of Daisy Road on his way home, when suddenly it began to rain.

"Bless me," said his Majesty, "it's going to pour, and I've forgotten my umbrella, I shall have my crown quite spoilt. Dear! dear! dear!"

The rain fell faster, and the poor king had yet two miles to go. His ermine was getting quite damp.

"What am I to do?" he exclaimed. "I shall be wet through. Dear! dear! I shall be obliged to take a cab."

The king looked along the road, and saw one coming. "Hi! hi!" shouted his most gracious Majesty, and he waved his sceptre till it almost flew out of his hand.

"Going home to change," said the cabman, with a careless air.

"Don't you know I'm the king?" said poor Bibbs.

"Oh, yes, you're know'd well enough," sneered the cabman; "give my love to the old woman."

"There, there!" said the poor monarch, appealing plaintively to the empty street; "there, that comes of having a Liberal Government; as soon as I get a change I'll be a despot."

You see the true royal spirit in him was not quite crushed.

The rain fell faster, and King Bibbs took off his crown and was looking at the great wet spots on the red cotton velvet when a loud voice exclaimed:--"Does your most gracious Majesty want a cab?"

The king was about to enter the cab without a word, when a ragged boy officiously stood by the wheel.

"What do you want?" said the boy's sovereign.

"To keep your most gracious Majesty's royal robe from touching the wheel," said the boy.

"I can do it myself," said the king, in quite an angry tone.

Now in the ordinary way a monarch would look upon such an attention as simply his due, but he knew this ragged young subject was looking for patronage; he wanted a copper, and the king felt he could not afford it. All who have studied the workings of the human heart know how we conceal our motives even from ourselves. To look at King Bibbs you would have thought he simply resented the boy's officiousness. He tried to persuade himself so, but the underlying feeling was his annoyance at not having a copper to spare. How he would have blushed if any of the Great Powers of Europe could have seen him at that moment!

"Go to the devil," said the king to his subject. "Go away! go away!"

"Blow'd if I pay my income tax next week!" said the young traitor as he made a very wicked face at the back of the cab.

"That's a bad boy," muttered Bibbs, as the cab drove off.

Now Bibbs, like many another proud spirit, had enjoyed the noble pleasure of refusing, which is only felt when you have full power to comply. When you are forced to refuse through weakness, it is very galling to a monarch, or even to one of us.

"A d--d bad boy!" he exclaimed, and as if the truth would out in spite of him he muttered: "It's all thro' that Liberal Government."

The house to which King Bibbs had directed the cabman to drive him, was what is now called a villa. It was one of a row, and was certainly not at all suggestive of a palace. Still it had a nice breakfast-parlour underground, and a handsome little drawing-room, with folding doors, upstairs. The rent was low, and the neighbourhood was considered, by those who lived there, fashionable.

At first poor Bibbs was treated with some respect, but after a time he fell into contempt, for kings, like other people, must keep their places.

On arriving at his house the king stepped from the cab and took out his purse. It would have done any Liberal Government good to see a constitutional monarch like Bibbs rubbing the edges of certain light coins to see if they were threepennies or fourpennies. But it would not have done any one good to see the look on the cabman's face as he received his fare. The king turned to go indoors.

"Here, hi!" shouted the cabman.

"What's the matter?" asked the king.

"What's the matter? As if your most gracious Majesty did not know! I want another sixpence."

"You've got your fare," said the king.

"Got my fare!" retorted the cabman; "you're a pretty gracious Majesty, you are. You go about rolling in luxury and wealth out of the hard earnings of such as me, and that's the way you use the money. Bah! The sooner you're done away with altogether the better. What good are you? Why you ain't worth the crown on your head."

The cabman drove away to swear, and the king paused to reflect. It took the king some time to calculate, but he found he cost that cabman, at his present rate of expenditure--he cost that cabman about an eighth of a farthing every ten years.

The king's lips moved, though he breathed no word; but any one who had watched the kind mouth would have seen that he was muttering something about that Liberal Government.

He took out his latch-key and let himself in; he paused in the passage, gently wiped his crown on the sleeve of his robe, and hung it on a hat-peg, and, placing his sceptre in the stand beside his forgotten umbrella--forgetfulness that had cost him a shilling--walked slowly into the parlour.

He sat down to meditate. You have only to read your Shakespeare to know this is the way of kings. He soliloquised somewhat in this fashion:

"It's quite clear the cheaper I get the more useless I appear. While I was surrounded with pomp, the people ran after and applauded me; now I get abused by a low cabman. I was like a grand ruin: while the columns stand, and the broken entablatures lie about in picturesque profusion, it is visited, made pictures of, and admired. But take away the old adornments, clear away the ground, and leave only a little pile of useless earth to mark the spot, and Admiration and Wonder, as they turn their backs on it, will soon find Respect at their heels--I see my fate."

The king grew reckless, and ordered an egg for his tea.

You have only to read your poets, and you will see that these sudden desperate acts foreshadow impending doom.

At the moment that Bibbs was wiping a small spot of egg from his beard,

his ministers were holding a cabinet council to determine what should be their next move to keep up their popularity.

There was nothing to cut down but the places of themselves and their friends and relations. That was out of the question. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and they had laboured hard to get into their present position.

How would it be if they determined that the king should no longer receive any help from the State, but earn his own living? A little hard work would be good for the king's constitution.

The idea was a popular one. It was carried out. But poor King Bibbs was too old to work, so it occurred to one of the ministers, who knew a City gentleman who had an ugly daughter that he wanted to marry to a person of rank, that by his influence the poor king might be got into an almshouse.

After some difficulty it was done, and his most gracious Majesty found himself in possession of two small rooms and ten shillings a week.

Any reasonable old monarch, you would think, might have been very comfortable under these circumstances, but wherever he turned he met unfriendly glances. People said almshouses were meant for industrious but unfortunate tradesmen and their wives, and not for bloated old emperors and kings. Here was a monarch not only grinding them down with taxation, but actually taking from them the just reward of virtuous old age.

At last it happened that a shopkeeper died insolvent, and his aged widow was destitute. There was nothing for it but to put her on the parish, which would be an expense, or get her into an almshouse.

The matter touched the pockets of the parishioners, and you may be pretty sure that soon a fine clamour was raised. What had the king done to deserve charity? Nothing. Meetings were held, bundles of letters were sent to the newspapers, and at last the influential City gentleman, who meant to stand for the borough at the next election, was forced to turn out King Bibbs or lose his popularity.

The influential gentleman assured his most gracious Majesty that he turned him out with great reluctance.

What was to be done now? It was pretty clear that the king must go on the parish. But what parish?

It mattered not where he had lived, he had never paid his rates, and not a parish would have him. Vestries met and discussed the matter. It was referred to committees, minutes were brought up and referred back again;

meantime poor Bibbs, who would not go in as a casual, was left, like old Lear, to perish.

It is true that on the first night an old Chartist, who was once imprisoned for treason, took pity on him, and gave him a bed, but when the king found out who his benefactor was, his old pride arose within him, and he turned away.

His most gracious Majesty might have been seen feeling with his thumb-nail the edge of his last coin. It was smooth; King Bibbs had but threepence in the world.

At this moment he saw some men with advertising boards on their backs. He looked at them; they were old and feeble. Ah! thought the king, I think I am strong enough to carry boards. He went up to one of the men, and asked him most respectfully where he got his employment.

The man turned round and sneered out,--

"Oh, you want to rob us now, do you? You want to take the crust out of our mouths. You ain't content with grinding us poor working men down with taxes--you ain't content with having every luxury down to almshouses, but you must interfere with us. If I catch your most gracious Majesty with half a board on your back, I'll just smash you. There!"

It will be observed that the people had lost nothing of the outward show of respect, and always addressed the king in the proper way.

Poor Bibbs bought a penny biscuit, and with the remaining twopence a piece of card and a bit of string. He wrote on the card,

"PRAY PITY A POOR CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH."

And with his crown in his hand to get whatever charity would give, he went into the bitter world to beg his way down to the grave.

* * * * *

Things went on merrily with the ministry for years. They filled all the old places and invented new. They put the king's head on the coin, and put the coin in their pockets.

But one fine day a certain Eastern despot with whom they had been intriguing, thought it a politic thing to pay King Bibbs a visit IN STATE. Here was a pretty kettle of fish! What were they to do for a king?

It would never do to tell the Eastern despot they didn't know where

their king was, and they did not care; he would have broken with them at once.

They sent in all directions to inquire for the king, but he was not to be found.

They then tried an advertisement:--

IF THIS SHOULD MEET THE EYE OF KING BIBBS,
he is requested to return to his disconsolate ministers, and
all shall be forgiven.

But poor Bibbs had not seen a newspaper for years, and his ministers were left disconsolate.

Then appeared another advertisement:--

LOST, A KING ANSWERING TO THE NAME OF BIBBS.
If any one will take him to the Treasury he will be liberally
rewarded.

Now it so happened that a quiet man of business, as he was passing along a country highway, saw a poor old half crazy man eating a few dry crusts. By his side was a bent sceptre, and on his head an old and battered crown, while his robe of royal purple was torn and soiled, and the ermine on it worn nearly bare and black.

As the stranger approached him, the old man took off his crown, and in a feeble voice said, "Pray pity a poor constitutional monarch."

The stranger looked in his face and exclaimed, "Good heaven, poor soul, what has brought you to this?"

The old man brushed a tear away from his sunken eye, and muttered--

"It was all through that Liberal Government!"

* * * * *

A week after a great city was all aglare with flags, and ablare with trumpets. The streets were lined with people, and a procession passed, at the head of which was a grand carriage drawn by eight horses. In the carriage sat a feeble old man in a splendid robe, and with a new crown that he kept taking off as he bowed to the multitude. At his side was the splendid Eastern despot, who bowed too, for the people not only said "Long live King Bibbs!" but they wished the splendid Eastern despot long life as well. Near the palace gates as they returned, the king left off bowing, and some were shocked at his pride and some at his pallor.

A few days after there was a grand and solemn procession.

And again, a few days after that, a grand and glorious procession.

* * * * *

The Government were true to their policy, and the wording of their advertisement. The stranger who had found King Bibbs, after wasting years in applications, received a note to say his affair was under consideration.

(_By permission of the Author._)

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Humorous Readings and Recitations*, by Various

THE RADIANT BOY.

MRS. CROW.

Captain Stewart, afterwards Lord Castlereagh, when he was a young man, happened to be quartered in Ireland. He was fond of sport, and one day the pursuit of game carried him so far that he lost his way, The weather, too, had become very rough, and in this strait he presented himself at the door of a gentleman's house, and sending in his card, requested shelter for the night. The hospitality of the Irish country gentry is proverbial; the master of the house received him warmly; said he feared he could not make him so comfortable as he could have wished, his house being full of visitors already, added to which, some strangers, driven by the inclemency of the night, had sought shelter before him, but such accommodation as he could give he was heartily welcome to; whereupon he called his butler, and committing the guest to his good offices, told him he must put him up somewhere, and do the best he could for him. There was no lady, the gentleman being a widower.

Captain Stewart found the house crammed, and a very jolly party it was. His host invited him to stay, and promised him good shooting if he would prolong his visit a few days: and, in fine, he thought himself extremely fortunate to have fallen into such pleasant quarters.

At length, after an agreeable evening, they all retired to bed, and the butler conducted him to a large room, almost divested of furniture, but with a blazing turf fire in the grate, and a shake-down on the floor, composed of cloaks and other heterogeneous materials.

Nevertheless, to the tired limbs of Captain Stewart, who had had a hard day's shooting, it looked very inviting; but before he lay down, he thought it advisable to take off some of the fire, which was

blazing up the chimney in what he thought an alarming manner. Having done this, he stretched himself on his couch and soon fell asleep.

He believed he had slept about a couple of hours when he awoke suddenly, and was startled by such a vivid light in the room that he thought it on fire, but on turning to look at the grate he saw the fire was out, though it was from the chimney the light proceeded. He sat up in bed, trying to discover what it was, when he perceived the form of a beautiful naked boy, surrounded by a dazzling radiance. The boy looked at him earnestly, and then the vision faded, and all was dark. Captain Stewart, so far from supposing what he had seen to be of a spiritual nature, had no doubt that the host, or the visitors, had been trying to frighten him. Accordingly, he felt indignant at the liberty, and on the following morning, when he appeared at breakfast, he took care to evince his displeasure by the reserve of his demeanour, and by announcing his intention to depart immediately. The host expostulated, reminding him of his promise to stay and shoot. Captain Stewart coldly excused himself, and, at length, the gentleman seeing something was wrong, took him aside, and pressed for an explanation; whereupon Captain Stewart, without entering into particulars, said he had been made the victim of a sort of practical joking that he thought quite unwarrantable with a stranger.

The gentleman considered this not impossible amongst a parcel of thoughtless young men, and appealed to them to make an apology; but one and all, on honour, denied the impeachment. Suddenly a thought seemed to strike him; he clapt his hand to his forehead, uttered an exclamation, and rang the bell.

"Hamilton," said he to the butler; "where did Captain Stewart sleep last night?"

"Well, sir," replied the man; "you know every place was full--the gentlemen were lying on the floor, three or four in a room--so I gave him the _Boy's Room_; but I lit a blazing fire to keep him from coming out."

"You were very wrong," said the host; "you know I have positively forbidden you to put anyone there, and have taken the furniture out of the room to ensure its not being occupied." Then, retiring with Captain Stewart, he informed him, very gravely, of the nature of the phenomena he had seen; and at length, being pressed for further information, he confessed that there _existed_ a tradition in the family, that whoever the "Radiant boy" appeared to will rise to the summit of power; and when he has reached the climax, will die a violent death, and I must say, he added, that the records that have been kept of his appearance go to confirm this persuasion.

JANIE'S SCHOOL DAYS

Janie was sixteen years old, but she looked as though she might be only thirteen as she sat on the front seat of the little schoolhouse far up on the mountainside of Kentucky. Her black hair was plastered tightly to her head. Her calico dress was much too long and the sleeves were much too short. Mother had made it long so that she might wear it for several years, while the sleeves were short so that she might have no excuse for not getting her hands in the dish water. Her bare feet were very dirty but her face shone from its recent scrubbing.

This was a great day for Janie, for the missionary had once again come to the schoolhouse. It had been three years since she was there before, and all that time Janie had waited for her. So she had hurried with her work in order that she might sit on the very front seat and hear every word. Last time she had told much about the school many miles away and Janie had said over and over to herself, "I shall go there; I shall go there." But of course it was foolish to say so, for there wasn't any chance that she ever could go. Why, there were seven brothers and sisters younger than she, and she had to work all day long to help to get them enough to eat. She could never go.

But she listened eagerly as the missionary told of all that was being done in the little schoolhouses all about the mountains and of the need of teachers to do the work.

"We like best to take a boy or girl from some hamlet and let them work with us for several years and then send them back to their own homes to serve there. I am wondering if there isn't a girl here who would like to be the teacher here and help to make Round Creek what it ought to be. If there is such a one, send them to us and we will do our best. If you will pay \$10 a term, we will do the rest."

Janie's little body was leaning far forward and her eyes were big with excitement. She knew a girl that would like to go. But \$10 a term! Why, one dollar seemed big in their home. So she crept out into the darkness of the night without saying a word to any one about her great, big longing. But up in the loft of the log house she lay long after the rest went to sleep trying to think of a way. Auntie was coming to stay with them in the fall. If she could just get the ten dollars by that time, maybe she could be spared for a term. That would help a little, anyway.

In the morning she loosened one of the boards of the woodshed. Beneath it she placed a little tin can, and in the can she put the five pennies that

she owned. It was berry time and she thought she knew of a way to earn some money that should be all her own. Near the mill, there were beautiful pieces of bark. In the woods there were many rare ferns. She would make some little baskets like she had made many times for the home, fill them with ferns and try to sell them when she went into the town with the berries. It meant getting up at four instead of five, but she could do that. It meant getting the ferns when the rest of the children were playing at lunch time--but that wasn't hard. And after her first day in town she had fifty cents to put into the cup. Oh, how rich she felt!

An extra quart of berries here and there, some flowers sold from her little garden patch on the hill, two little kittens sold instead of being drowned--and so the money in the cup grew very, very slowly and no one dreamed it was there. But her dream grew with the contents of the cup. She could see herself all dressed in a neat dress going up the hill to the school and the little children following her and calling her teacher.

But in August, George fell from the hay-mow and for days he lay there white and still. Mother had done all she could and there was no money to send for the doctor. Then it was that a little black-haired girl went out in the shed and for the first time counted the money in the cup--one, two, three, four, five, six, almost seven dollars. Long she looked at it. Then she went into town to do the errand for her mother and five of the precious dollars were counted into the hands of the doctor with the repeated statement,

"Tell mother that you happened to be going by and just stopped, so all she needs to pay you is a dollar, for she has that."

So mother never knew, nor did the sick boy know, of the sacrifice the girl had made. Auntie came and went, and because it was winter the money in the cup hardly increased one bit. Sometimes she was almost discouraged, but then she would say to herself,

"Why, it took years and years for Abraham Lincoln to get to the White House. It doesn't matter if it takes twenty years. I am going to get to that schoolhouse. I will be a teacher."

She could crochet and she could embroider, so these helped a bit. She planted more things in her own garden and the money from these was her own. So again as the summer drew to a close, she knew there must be several dollars in the cup--but she daren't count it, for if it should be ten and still she couldn't go--oh, that would be worse than all!

It was five days before school was to open that there came a letter from grandmother saying that she was coming to stay for the winter, and while mother was happy over this, Janie asked if she might not be spared to go to school. At first there was a firm "No" for an answer. But she begged so hard to be allowed to go for only one term that she saw signs of relenting

in her mother's face. Then she ran to get the cup--and in it was nearly nine dollars.

Where should she get the rest? Mother had none--yet she must have it. There was only one way. She could sell Biddy, her pet hen whom she loved so much. She would ask her brother to take her in the morning, for she could never do it herself. So with tears in her eyes, she patted her pet and put it into a box ready for the morning. Oh! ten dollars was such a lot of money for a little girl to get!

It was thirty miles to the school, so she had only one day to get ready. But she had few clothes and so it was an easy matter. She put them neatly in a bundle and with a queer feeling underneath the little red dress, now too short instead of too long, she started bright and early to walk the thirty miles to school. Many times she turned to look back at the little log cabin till it was hidden from her sight by a turn in the road. Then somehow she felt very much alone in the world.

On and on she walked till at last, twenty miles from home, she came to the home of an old neighbor and rested for the night. It was two in the afternoon of the next day when she saw in the distance the large brick building which she knew must be the school. She longed to run to it but her feet were very sore and her body was very tired. So she trudged on till she came to the office.

"Please, Miss, I have come to school. I can only stay one term but I came anyway and here is the money. The missionary lady said you would do the rest," and she handed her the precious money.

"And to whom did you write about entering?" said the lady kindly.

"To nobody. You see I didn't know I could come till Tuesday," said Janie.

"Well, I am so sorry," said the lady, "but you see we have all the girls we can possibly take. So we can't have you this term. Perhaps you could come next term if you leave your name now."

The whole world seemed to fall from under Janie's feet. She was here, thirty miles from home. She had all the money--she had sold dear old Biddy--yet she could not stay. Not a word did she answer. She just stood and stared into space.

"I am very tired for I have walked thirty miles to get here. May I stay just for to-night?" she asked, rolling the ten dollars carefully in her big handkerchief.

"School doesn't open till to-morrow but we will tuck you in somewhere for to-night. I am so sorry for you, but we just haven't a bit of room after to-morrow. Sit down on the porch and rest yourself," said the lady.

She brought her a glass of milk and then left her alone with her thoughts. How could she go home? Perhaps there would never come a time when she could be spared again. Was there no way in which she could stay?

Ten minutes later, a little girl in a short red calico dress went down the steps and along the street, looking for a doctor's sign. When she found it, she rang the bell and asked for the doctor.

"Please, sir," she said, "I thought you might know some one who wanted a girl to work for them. I want to go to school this term and I have earned the money to come. And now that I am here, there is no place for me and I must walk the thirty miles back. But I am willing to work. I will work for nothing if only I can go to the school in the afternoon. Sir, I just must be a teacher and I just must stay now and get started."

The doctor whistled a little tune before he answered. "And tell me how you earned the money to come." Then he whistled another tune as she talked. "Stay here to-night," he said. "I will find out at the school just how much they will let you come in the afternoons. I am sure you can find work enough, so don't worry."

And sure enough, he found a place for her and so she started with the rest on the very first morning. She was radiantly happy till she heard a boy say,

"Look at the red dress that is coming in! Better loan her a red handkerchief to piece it down with."

Then she knew that she was different from the rest. Her shoes were coarse and rough. Her hair looked, oh, so different. Her hands were red and big. She was here where she had longed to come but oh, how unhappy she was! She was almost ready to cry. Instead she shook her head proudly and said to herself, "I will be a teacher. What do I care if they laugh?"

The lessons were very hard, for her preparation was not good; every minute that she could spare she must spend on getting ready for the next day, so she had little time to be lonely. But she still minded the fact that her clothes were so very different. Many a good cry she had in the quiet of her little room as she looked at the red dress laid out for the coming day.

The term sped by and she was making good. Oh, if she could only stay! But she had no money except the little that the good doctor had given her now and then for doing errands for him. She could take her books home and perhaps she could do it all by herself.

So she waited till almost the last day before she told the woman for whom she worked that she was leaving.

"Why, girlie," she answered, "you have much more than ten dollars coming from me. I have never paid you because the doctor told me you would ask for it if you needed it. I will give it to you and then you can go and pay your ten dollars. I wouldn't have you go home for anything."

Clasping her precious money in her hand, she flew up the stairs. Here was a letter from her brother also. What a happy day! Eagerly she opened it and read,

"Mother is counting on your coming home for we need your help badly. The cow has died and we are without milk till we can get another. Mother thinks she must spare you at home and let you work out to earn money."

Oh! Oh! She was needed! She must take the money she had earned to help to buy a cow and again she must forget school. So she went again to her mistress, told her story and began to prepare for the long walk. She went to the school, borrowed the books, and promised them she would surely come again. Then she went again to the old doctor who had been so kind to her.

He listened thoughtfully as she told him of her new plans which still had not changed her vision of being a teacher.

"I will come back, even though it be after four or five years. I will come," she said, and she rose to go.

Then the doctor turned to his desk and took from it the picture of a girl.

"That was my little girl," he said. "She, too, wanted to be a teacher and she was in this very school when sickness and death came. When you came to me that first morning and said, 'I just must be a teacher,' I could hear her say to me, 'Help her.' So I did what you asked me to do--got you a place to work for nothing though I knew you were to be paid. I have watched you work, I have watched you suffer because of the red dress; I have watched you try to do your duty at the sacrifice of yourself. And now that you have done all that you can, I am ready to do the rest. Send the money that you have earned to your mother to help to buy the cow. Come to live here and be my office girl. The money that you earn can go to your mother for I will do for you what I would have done for her and I will do it for her sake and because you have shown me that you are worth while. You _shall_ be a teacher."

So Janie lived in the home of her new friend. There was help on her lessons, the old red dress went back to the little home in the hills to be worn by some one whom it would fit and in her new, pretty things she could see more plainly--Janie, the teacher.

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Fireside Stories for Girls in Their Teens*, by

THE PHANTOM DRAGOON

The height that rises a mile or so to the south of Newark, Delaware, is called Iron Hill, because it is rich in hematite ore, but about the time of General Howe's advance to the Brandywine it might well have won its name because of the panoply of war—the sullen guns, the flashing swords, and glistening bayonets—that appeared among the British tents pitched on it. After the red-coats had established camp here the American outposts were advanced and one of the pickets was stationed at Welsh Tract Church. On his first tour of duty the sentry was thrown into great alarm by the appearance of a figure robed from head to foot in white, that rode a horse at a charging gait within ten feet of his face. When guard was relieved the soldier begged that he might never be assigned to that post again. His nerves were strong in the presence of an enemy in the flesh—but an enemy out of the grave! Ugh! He would desert rather than encounter that shape again. His request was granted. The sentry who succeeded him was startled, in the small hours, by a rush of hoofs and the flash of a pallid form. He fired at it, and thought that he heard the sound of a mocking laugh come back.

Every night the phantom horseman made his rounds, and several times the sentinels shot at him without effect, the white horse and white rider showing no annoyance at these assaults. When it came the turn of a sceptical and unimaginative old corporal to take the night detail, he took the liberty of assuming the responsibilities of this post himself. He looked well to the priming of his musket, and at midnight withdrew out of the moonshine and waited, with his gun resting on a fence. It was not long before the beat of hoofs was heard approaching, and in spite of himself the corporal felt a thrill along his spine as a mounted figure that might have represented Death on the pale horse came into view; but he jammed his hat down, set his teeth, and sighted his flint-lock with deliberation. The rider was near, when bang went the corporal's musket, and a white form was lying in the road, a horse speeding into the distance. Scrambling over the fence, the corporal, reassured, ran to the form and turned it over: a British scout, quite dead. The daring fellow, relying on the superstitious fears of the rustics in his front, had made a nightly ride as a ghost, in order to keep the American outposts from advancing, and also to guess, from elevated points, at the strength and disposition of their troops. He wore a cuirass of steel, but that did not protect his brain from the corporal's bullet.

THE NAIN ROUGE

Among all the impish offspring of the Stone God, wizards and witches, that made Detroit feared by the early settlers, none were more dreaded than the Nain Rouge (Red Dwarf), or Demon of the Strait, for it appeared only when there was to be trouble. In that it delighted. It was a shambling, red-faced creature, with a cold, glittering eye and teeth protruding from a grinning mouth. Cadillac, founder of Detroit, having struck at it, presently lost his seigniory and his fortunes. It was seen scampering along the shore on the night before the attack on Bloody Run, when the brook that afterward bore this name turned red with the blood of soldiers. People saw it in the smoky streets when the city was burned in 1805, and on the morning of Hull's surrender it was found grinning in the fog. It rubbed its bony knuckles expectantly when David Fisher paddled across the strait to see his love, Soulange Gaudet, in the only boat he could find—a wheel-barrow, namely—but was sobered when David made a safe landing.

It chuckled when the youthful bloods set off on Christmas day to race the frozen strait for the hand of buffer Beauvais's daughter Claire, but when her lover's horse, a wiry Indian nag, came pacing in it fled before their happiness. It was twice seen on the roof of the stable where that sour-faced, evil-eyed old mumbler, Jean Beaugrand, kept his horse, Sans Souci—a beast that, spite of its hundred years or more, could and did leap every wall in Detroit, even the twelve-foot stockade of the fort, to steal corn and watermelons, and that had been seen in the same barn, sitting at a table, playing seven-up with his master, and drinking a liquor that looked like melted brass. The dwarf whispered at the sleeping ear of the old chief who slew Friar Constantine, chaplain of the fort, in anger at the teachings that had parted a white lover from his daughter and led her to drown herself—a killing that the red man afterward confessed, because he could no longer endure the tolling of a mass bell in his ears and the friar's voice in the wind.

The Nain Rouge it was who claimed half of the old mill, on Presque Isle, that the sick and irritable Josette swore that she would leave to the devil when her brother Jean pestered her to make her will in his favor, giving him complete ownership. On the night of her death the mill was wrecked by a thunderbolt, and a red-faced imp was often seen among the ruins, trying to patch the machinery so as to grind the devil's grist. It directed the dance of black cats in the mill at Pont Rouge, after the widow's curse had fallen on Louis Robert, her brother-in-law. This man, succeeding her husband as director of the property, had developed such miserly traits that she and her children were literally starved to death, but her dying curse threw such ill luck on the place and set afloat such evil report about it that he took himself away. The Nain Rouge may have been the Lutin that took Jacques L'Esperance's ponies from the stable at Grosse Pointe, and, leaving no tracks in sand or snow, rode them through the air all night, restoring them at dawn quivering with fatigue, covered with foam, bloody with the lash of a thorn-bush. It stopped that exercise on the night that Jacques hurled a font of holy water at it, but to keep it away the people of Grosse Pointe still mark their houses with the sign of a cross.

It was lurking in the wood on the day that Captain Dalzell went against Pontiac, only to perish in an ambush, to the secret relief of his superior, Major Gladwyn, for the major hoped to win the betrothed of Dalzell; but when the girl heard that her lover had been killed at Bloody Run, and his head had been carried on a pike, she sank to the ground never to rise again in health, and in a few days she had followed the victims of the massacre. There was a suspicion that the Nain Rouge had power to change his shape for one not less offensive. The brothers Tremblay had no luck in fishing through the straits and lakes until one of them agreed to share his catch with St. Patrick, the saint's half to be sold at the church-door for the benefit of the poor and for buying masses to relieve souls in purgatory. His brother doubted if this benefit would last, and feared that they might be lured into the water and turned into fish, for had not St. Patrick eaten pork chops on a Friday, after dipping them into holy water and turning them into trout? But his good brother kept on and prospered and the bad one kept on grumbling. Now, at Grosse Isle was a strange thing called the rolling muff, that all were afraid of, since to meet it was a warning of trouble; but, like the feu follet, it could be driven off by holding a cross toward it or by asking it on what day of the month came Christmas. The worse of the Tremblays encountered this creature and it filled him with dismay. When he returned his neighbors observed an odor—not of sanctity—on his garments, and their view of the matter was that he had met a skunk. The graceless man felt convinced, however, that he had received a devil's baptism from the Nain Rouge, and St. Patrick had no stancher allies than both the Tremblays, after that.

THE SNAKE'S REVENGE

There lived in ancient days an archer, whose home was near the Water Gate of Seoul. He was a man of great strength and famous for his valour.

Water Gate has reference to a hole under the city wall, by which the waters of the Grand Canal find their exit. In it are iron pickets to prevent people's entering or departing by that way.

On a certain afternoon when this military officer was taking a walk, a great snake was seen making its way by means of the Water Gate. The snake's head had already passed between the bars, but its body, being larger, could not get through, so there it was held fast. The soldier drew an arrow, and, fitting it into the string, shot the snake in the head. Its head being fatally injured, the creature died. The archer then drew it out, pounded it into a pulp, and left it.

A little time later the man's wife conceived and bore a son. From the first the child was afraid of its father, and when it saw him it used to cry and seem greatly frightened. As it grew it hated the sight of its father more and more. The man became suspicious of this, and so, instead of loving his son, he grew to dislike him.

On a certain day, when there were just the two of them in the room, the officer lay down to have a midday siesta, covering his face with his sleeve, but all the while keeping his eye on the boy to see what he would do. The child glared at his father, and thinking him asleep, got a knife and made a thrust at him. The man jumped, grabbed the knife, and then with a club gave the boy a blow that left him dead on the spot. He pounded him into a pulp, left him and went away. The mother, however, in tears, covered the little form with a quilt and prepared for its burial. In a little the quilt began to move, and she in alarm raised it to see what had happened, when lo! beneath it the child was gone and there lay coiled a huge snake instead. The mother jumped back in fear, left the room and did not again enter.

When evening came the husband returned and heard the dreadful story from his wife. He went in and looked, and now all had metamorphosed into a huge snake. On the head of it was the scar mark of the arrow that he had shot. He said to the snake, "You and I were originally not enemies, I therefore did wrong in shooting you as I did; but your intention to take revenge through becoming my son was a horrible deed. Such a thing as this is proof that my suspicions of you were right and just. You became my son in order to kill me, your father;

why, therefore, should I not in my turn kill you? If you attempt it again, it will certainly end in my taking your life. You have already had your revenge, and have once more transmigrated into your original shape, let us drop the past and be friends from now on. What do you say?"

He repeated this over and urged his proposals, while the snake with bowed head seemed to listen intently. He then opened the door and said, "Now you may go as you please." The snake then departed, making straight for the Water Gate, and passed out between the bars. It did not again appear.

Note.--Man is a spiritual being, and different from all other created things, and though a snake has power of venom, it is still an insignificant thing compared with a man. The snake died, and by means of the transmigration of its soul took its revenge. Man dies, but I have never heard that he can transmigrate as the snake did. Why is it that though a spiritual being he is unable to do what beasts do? I have seen many innocent men killed, but not one of them has ever returned to take his revenge on the lawless one who did it, and so I wonder more than ever over these stories of the snake. The Superior Man's knowing nothing of the law that governs these things is a regret to me.

Im Bang.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Korean Folk Tales*, by Im Bang and Yi Ryuk

THE THREE WISHES.

THERE were once two little white rats who lived in a hutch with wide bars. They had plenty of soft hay to sleep in, and bread-and-milk at the proper times. But they were dull, for they never saw the world, and they had nothing to talk of in the long winter evenings. One winter day a Fairy knocked at their door.

"I am cold and hungry," she said, "and Fairyland is a long way off; I can never get there in this snowy weather."

"Come in," said Mrs. Whiterat, and the Fairy crept in through the bars. Mr. Whiterat gave the Fairy some bread-and-milk, and Mrs. Whiterat sat close beside her in the hay—so that soon the Fairy felt quite warm and cheerful again. And she lodged with the white rats all the winter, and they were all three as happy as could be.

Then when spring came, and the daffydowndillies were waving their yellow heads in the sun, the Fairy said: "I must go home now. You have been very good to me. You may have three wishes." And she waved her little wand and flew away.

Now, the white rats had often longed to be free, to run about under the haystacks, and bring up large lively families, like the brown farm rats. So now they said—

"Oh! I wish we were out of the hutch!" And in a minute they found themselves among the hayricks.

"Oh! how big and beautiful the world is," they said.

And then a dreadful thing happened. A great brown rat jumped out at them.

"Get along with you!" it said. "We don't want any toy-rats here." And it showed its sharp teeth and looked so fierce that Mrs. Whiterat trembled to the end of her grey tail, as she cried out—

"Oh! I wish we were safe in the hutch!" And the same instant, there they were at home again.

And the third wish? Well, they haven't made up their minds about that yet. It gives them something to talk about in the winter evenings!

E. Nesbit.

THE STORY OF TOMMY.

ONCE there was a little boy called Tommy. His Mother sent him one day into the town to buy some needles. On his way home he got tired of carrying them, so when he saw a hay-cart which he knew would pass his Mother's door he stuck the needles into a bundle of hay. When he got home his Mother said: "Well, Tommy, and where are the needles?"

"Oh! Mother, they will be here directly. I was tired of carrying them, so I stuck them into a hay-cart which is coming this way, and it will soon be here."

"Oh, you stupid boy, Tommy! you _stupid_ boy! If you were tired of carrying the needles you should have stuck them into your coat."

"I'll do better next time, Mother; I'll do better next time."

A few days after, his Mother said: "Tommy, will you go into the town and fetch a pound of butter?"

Off went Tommy, bought the pound of butter, and put it all over his coat. When he got home his Mother said: "Well, Tommy, and where's the butter?"

"I put it all over my coat, but the sun melted it."

"Oh! you stupid boy, Tommy! You should have put it on a nice white plate and covered it with a piece of white paper."

"Oh! I'll do better next time, Mother; I'll do better next time."

A few days after, his Mother said: "Tommy, Farmer Jones has given us a little hen. Will you go and fetch it?"

"Oh! yes," said Tommy. Off he went, fetched the little hen, and put it on a white plate; but before he could put a nice piece of white paper over it, it had flown quite away!

When he got home, his Mother said: "Well, Tommy, and where is the little hen?"

"Oh! Mother, I did what you told me; I put it on a white plate, but before I could cover it with a piece of paper it flew quite away."

"Oh! you stupid boy, Tommy! You stupid boy! You ought to have put it in a wicker basket and shut down the lid."

"I'll do better next time, Mother; I'll do better next time."

A few days after, his Mother said: "Tommy, there is a plum pudding for dinner. Go and fetch a pound of brown sugar."

Off went Tommy, bought the pound of sugar, and put it in a wicker basket, and shut the lid down tight. When he got home his Mother said: "Well, Tommy, and where's the sugar?"

"Here it is, Mother, here it is." And he opened the basket, but it was quite empty, for all the sugar had tumbled through the holes in the wicker-work!

"Oh! you stupid boy, Tommy! You should have put the sugar in a paper bag and tied a piece of string very tightly round it."

"I'll do better next time, Mother; I'll do better next time."

Some time after, his Mother said: "Tommy, Farmer Jones has promised us a dear little puppy dog. Will you go and fetch it?"

"Oh! yes," said Tommy. So off he went, fetched the little puppy dog, put it in a paper bag, and tied a piece of string very tightly round its neck. When he got home and opened the bag, the poor little puppy was quite dead.

"Oh! you stupid boy, Tommy! You stupid boy! You should have tied a string quite loosely round the little dog's neck, and let it run after you, and you should have called, 'Hi, little dog!'"

"I'll do better next time, Mother," said Tommy, crying.

A long time after, his Mother said: "Tommy, will you go into the town and fetch a leg of mutton? Now, mind you bring it home very carefully."

"Oh! yes," said Tommy. So off he went, bought a leg of mutton, tied a piece of string round it, and dragged it after him on the ground, and said: "Hi, little dog! Ho, little dog!" and all the little dogs in the town came after him and ate the mutton, and when he got home there was nothing left but the bone!

When his Mother saw it, she said: "Really, Tommy, you are too stupid; you really are quite a goose."

A little while after, Tommy was nowhere to be found. His Mother hunted everywhere for him; she cried "Tommy!" here and "Tommy!" there, but she could not find him. As she was coming through the yard and crying and calling, "Tommy! where's my boy Tommy?" she heard a little voice that seemed to come from the poultry-house: "Here I am, Mother; here I am!"

She opened the door, and there was Tommy sitting on the goose's nest. She asked him what he was doing, and he said: "Oh! Mother, you said I was quite a goose, so I thought I had better come and sit on the goose's nest, and I've broken all the eggs!"

Wasn't he a silly boy?

Constance Milman.

2 tales from

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *My Short Story Book*, by Various

THE LITTLE ALMOND BLOSSOM

Mo Chun called her the little Almond Blossom, as she was so bright and beautiful, and she loved her so. Her real name was Gum Sing, and she was, so the mother thought, the prettiest thing in all the big Chinatown of San Francisco.

Gum Sing's father kept a store, where they sold all sorts of fine china and silk. She often went to her father's store, but never alone. Oh, no! she was too precious to be trusted out alone, and then she was too young to find her way through the winding streets, and the doors all looked alike to her, so the _mo chun_ or the nurse always accompanied her.

Gum Sing had such a round, dimpled face, and there always seemed to be kisses lurking in the dimples. And she had the merriest little laugh,--just like music to her mother. It was not enough for _mo chun_ to see this little face every day, and to sleep on the hard pillow with it at night. No, that was not enough, for how could any one ever have enough of so fair a thing? So the father and mother agreed that their little Almond Blossom must have her picture taken. That was a great day in the house of Gum. Such an event had never happened before.

Now Gum Sing did not know at all what it meant to have her picture taken, but she knew by the smiles on her mother's face, and by the careful and proud manner in which she was being arrayed, that it could be no small thing, and that some way or other she was expected to look as beautiful and as much like the almond flower as she could, as that was sacred to the Chinese.

With delight she saw that she was to wear her lavender silk blouse. "Oh, _mo chun_," she giggled, "I likee wear _ho chun's_ big gold watch."

Now, although the little mother did not think it just exactly the proper thing for any one so tiny as Gum Sing to wear a watch and chain, yet this was such an important event--and such a proud moment for her--that she could see no harm in letting her have her way about it this time. She insisted upon carrying _mo chun's_ big fan, too, and it certainly did look very wonderful to see it clasped in the tiny brown hand.

The trousers of pink silk were so bright and pretty, and the dainty little sandals had been embroidered by _mo chun_ herself.

When all was ready, _ho chun_ appeared on the scene, and the happy party started out for the photograph gallery of Hen Yin Gock.

"I so happy--I so glad," giggled the little Gum Sing, not knowing just what she was happy about, only she was such a happy little thing always, and being the only child had so much love given her. At last they reached the place. There did not seem to be anything wonderful about it.

There was a window with a lot of pictures in it, and a crowd of Chinamen were jostling each other to see them. Then they ascended the stairway and rapped on the door, and some one called out in Chinese, “_Yap loi le_,” which means “Come in.”

They went in, and the man talked to them pleasantly, but when he went and put his head under a black curtain on some kind of a box, then Gum Sing thought it was time to complain. This was too much! She cried: “_Mo chun_ --I no likee--will it hurt? I ’flaid the big ddragon come out of the box.” (The nurse had evidently been telling her stories about the big Chinese dragon.)

Then the good Hen Yin Gock came out from the curtain, and assured her that there was no danger. He brought out two lovely yellow roses in a vase, and put them on a small table with a bright cover, and then told Gum Sing: “If you heap good girl, and do what I say, I give you the floweh, pletty soon.”

Then he also placed on the table a flute, with gaily colored tassels, and then the cunningest little jar, which looked very much as if it might contain preserved ginger, and she was just thinking how much she liked preserved ginger when the man said: “Now keep still! look light at this box!” (The little mother trembled; could it be that after all there was something horrible in the box?) “There is a little bird in this box, and you may see it fly out if you are quiet. Now!--all leady!” (ready).

Gum Sing was so full of giggles that she could hardly be quiet, and the dimples chased each other all over her sunny face. The father and mother gazed with love and admiration at the beauty of their little almond flower, with one hand thrown carelessly on the table and the other grasping the fan.

“There!” at last said the photographer.

Gum Sing wanted to know what it was all about, yet she could not seem to find out. But several days after that, when _ho chun_ was out on the pavement in front of their home, putting some China lilies in a bowl of water, a man came, and handed him a little package. Gum Sing was all curiosity in a minute.

“Oh, _ho chun_, what is it? Let me see!” she cried, and _mo chun_ was almost as eager. So the father opened the package while they waited wonderingly, and there, before their eyes, on pieces of polished cardboard--could it be?--yes, yes!--the picture of their little Almond Blossom--big watch, fan, dimples, giggle and all.

But Gum Sing wonders to this day why the bird did not come out of the box.

THE JELLY-FISH TAKES A JOURNEY

Once upon a time the jelly-fish was a very handsome fellow. His form was beautiful, and round as the full moon. He had glittering scales and fins and a tail as other fishes have, but he had more than these. He had little feet as well, so that he could walk upon the land as well as swim in the sea. He was merry and he was gay, he was beloved and trusted of the Dragon King. In spite of all this, his grandmother always said he would come to a bad end, because he would not mind his books at school. She was right. It all came about in this wise.

The Dragon King was but lately wed when the young Lady Dragon his wife fell very sick. She took to her bed and stayed there, and wise folk in Dragonland shook their heads and said her last day was at hand. Doctors came from far and near, and they dosed her and they bled her, but no good at all could they do her, the poor young thing, nor recover her of her sickness.

The Dragon King was beside himself.

“Heart’s Desire,” he said to his pale bride, “I would give my life for you.”

“Little good would it do me,” she answered. “Howbeit, if you will fetch me a monkey’s liver I will eat it and live.”

“A monkey’s liver!” cried the Dragon King. “A monkey’s liver! You talk wildly, O light of mine eyes. How shall I find a monkey’s liver? Know you not, sweet one, that monkeys dwell in the trees of the forest, whilst we are in the deep sea?”

Tears ran down the Dragon Queen’s lovely countenance.

“If I do not have the monkey’s liver, I shall die,” she said.

Then the Dragon went forth and called to him the jelly-fish.

“The Queen must have a monkey’s liver,” he said, “to cure her of her sickness.”

“What will she do with the monkey’s liver?” asked the jelly-fish.

“Why, she will eat it,” said the Dragon King.

“Oh!” said the jelly-fish.

“Now,” said the King, “you must go and fetch me a live monkey. I have heard that they dwell in the tall trees of the forest. Therefore swim quickly, O jelly-fish, and bring a monkey with you back again.”

“How will I get the monkey to come back with me?” said the jelly-fish.

“Tell him of all the beauties and pleasures of Dragonland. Tell him he will be happy here and that he may play with mermaids all the day long.”

“Well,” said the jelly-fish, “I’ll tell him that.”

Off set the jelly-fish; and he swam and he swam, till at last he reached the shore where grew the tall trees of the forest. And, sure enough, there was a monkey sitting in the branches of a persimmon tree, eating persimmons.

“The very thing,” said the jelly-fish to himself, “I’m in luck.”

“Noble monkey,” he said, “will you come to Dragonland with me?”

“How should I get there?” said the monkey.

“Only sit on my back,” said the jelly-fish, “and I’ll take you there; you’ll have no trouble at all.”

“Why should I go there, after all?” said the monkey. “I am very well off as I am.”

“Ah,” said the jelly-fish, “it’s plain that you know little of all the beauties and pleasures of Dragonland. There you will be happy as the day is long. You will win great riches and honour. Besides, you may play with the mermaids from morn till eve.”

“I’ll come,” said the monkey.

And he slipped down from the persimmon tree and jumped on the jelly-fish’s back.

When the two of them were about half-way over to Dragonland, the jelly-fish laughed.

“Now, jelly-fish, why do you laugh?”

“I laugh for joy,” said the jelly-fish. “When you come to Dragonland, my master, the Dragon King, will get your liver, and give it to my

mistress the Dragon Queen to eat, and then she will recover from her sickness.”

“My liver?” said the monkey.

“Why, of course,” said the jelly-fish.

“Alas and alack,” cried the monkey, “I’m grieved indeed, but if it’s my liver you’re wanting I haven’t it with me. To tell you the truth, it weighs pretty heavy, so I just took it out and hung it upon a branch of that persimmon tree where you found me. Quick, quick, let’s go back for it.”

Back they went, and the monkey was up in the persimmon tree in a twinkling.

“Mercy me, I don’t see it at all,” he said. “Where can I have mislaid it? I should not be surprised if some rascal has stolen it,” he said.

Now if the jelly-fish had minded his books at school, would he have been hoodwinked by the monkey? You may believe not. But his grandmother always said he would come to a bad end.

“I shall be some time finding it,” said the monkey. “You’d best be getting home to Dragonland. The King would be loath for you to be out after dark. You can call for me another day. _Sayonara._”

The monkey and the jelly-fish parted on the best of terms.

The minute the Dragon King set eyes on the jelly-fish, “Where’s the monkey?” he said.

“I’m to call for him another day,” said the jelly-fish. And he told all the tale.

The Dragon King flew into a towering rage. He called his executioners and bid them beat the jelly-fish.

“Break every bone in his body,” he cried; “beat him to a jelly.”

Alas for the sad fate of the jelly-fish! Jelly he remains to this very day.

As for the young Dragon Queen, she was fain to laugh when she heard the story.

“If I can’t have a monkey’s liver I must needs do without it,” she said.

“Give me my best brocade gown and I will get up, for I feel a good deal better.”

A STRANGE STORY.

MR. JOHNSTONE'S INFIRMITY.

"Felix Johnstone! What a name, mamma! There is a great want of tone about it. Don't you think so? I'm sure I hope the man is presentable, but you know how careless and unobservant Dick is."

The speaker, Maud Ponsonby-Fitzwaring, a lovely girl of some twenty summers, sat, pen in hand, and with her pretty brows all a-pucker, in her mamma's boudoir, scanning the list of names of intended guests of Ormsby Hall during the ensuing shooting season.

"My dear," replied her stately and abundant mamma in a tone which settled the matter, "he is as rich as Cræsus, and even if he should prove eccentric, why he is an Australian, and you know everything is excused in a 'Colonial;' especially," resumed the dame after a brief pause and with more than her usual drawl--"especially if he is very wealthy."

Maud was too young for an argument of this kind to have any weight with her, but she only shrugged her well-poised shoulders by way of protest, and presently the letter of invitation for the Twelfth of August, when grouse shooting commenced, was on its way to Mr. Felix Johnstone.

The person whose name set the dainty Maud's teeth on edge was a stoutly-built, well-preserved gentleman of some forty years, the greater part of whose life had been spent at the Antipodes, where, if he had not acquired much of the polish demanded by polite society, he had, nevertheless, secured a goodly supply of that excellent substitute for it--gold.

When Mr. Felix Johnstone reached the Hall, in response to the invitation, he found that the bulk of the other visitors had already arrived, and to a great extent "sorted" themselves, as he termed it; that is to say, that the males and females had, for the most part, settled upon their friendships for the period of their stay at Ormsby Hall.

This arrangement left the late arrival somewhat out in the cold. It is true that his friend Dick did his best to make him feel at home, but, as the old Squire, Colonel Ponsonby-Fitzwaring, was somewhat gouty, most of his duties as host devolved upon his son, who had in consequence but

little time to devote to any particular guest.

“Jarvis,” said Mr. Johnstone to his valet the morning after his arrival, “you’ll have to keep me posted in things. You know that’s what you’re here for. Captain Fitzwaring recommended you as being the best man he knew, and Dick--I mean the Captain--knows a good man, if anybody does.”

“Yes, sir,” responded Jarvis with more of embarrassment than his usually immovable face was wont to show.

“What shall you wear this morning, sir?” inquired the valet, as if anxious to turn the conversation.

“Well, I thought a frock coat and that pair of lavender trousers, which Poole sent in before I left London, and a white waistcoat, would about suit this kind of weather and the style of society hereabouts--these and--of course patent leather shoes.”

It could hardly have happened in so well-trained a servant, and yet surely it was the ghost of a smile which his master saw flitting across Jarvis’ face.

“Eh! What is it, Jarvis?” inquired Mr. Johnstone sharply, “wont these do?”

“Well, sir,” replied the valet with much deference, “most gentlemen wear knickerbockers and lacing boots in the morning when they are going shooting. I thought, perhaps, this velvet jacket and these corduroy trousers, and woollen stockings or gaiters--”

“What, these great coarse things? Why, I was better dressed than that in the ‘Bush!’--still,” noticing a certain relentlessness of aspect creeping over the well-trained servant’s face, “if I must, I must; only it seems to me that there’s a great fondness here for showing one’s legs. I’m sure the way these flunkies aired their white silk stockings and great calves last night before the ladies was hardly decent. By the way, Jarvis, do you know any of the gentlemen staying here? If you do, just fire away and tell me all about them while I’m dressing myself like a--like a navvy!”

“Well, sir, there’s Mr. Granby just walking across the lawn. He is a celebrated barrister, made his reputation as a junior counsel in the Tichborne case; he is likely to get a judgeship out in Bombay soon, they say. The gentleman with him is Mr. Softleigh, editor of the Morning Whisper, a very fashionable paper. That dark-browed swarthy man with the piercing eyes, just lighting his cigar, is Hugo Swinton, the African traveler who had the terrible fight with the great gorilla now in the Zoo. The man waiting for him is Captain Bottomly, of the Guards, who reformed the British square when the Soudanese broke it at--somewhere in

Egypt. They say he has six spear wounds in his body.”

“But, I say, Lord! Who is that pompous individual dressed in black--the one with the clean shaven face and port-winey complexion?”

“That, sir, is the Bishop of Oldchester,” replied Jarvis, with a touch of remonstrance in his tone.

“Well; and even he puts his chubby old calves on exhibition. Is he going shooting too?”

“No, sir,” replied Jarvis, with quite an air, as if there were limits to this kind of thing. “All the Bishops wear black tight fitting cloth gaiters; it is their Episcopal dress.”

“O, I see; well now, who is that very elegant young gentleman with the cane, bowing to the ladies in the pony carriage?”

“That is a Mr. Elphinstone Howard. I have never seen him before, but they tell me he belongs to one of the County families in the North somewhere. He is not very well acquainted with the gentry around here yet, as he has been brought up abroad where his father was retrenching. He saved Colonel Fitzwaring’s life in Florence by stopping a run-away horse, and with that introduction the family took him up and introduced him to English society.”

“Well, Jarvis, all of these men seem to be celebrated for something excepting myself. Can you tell me how such a common-place person as I am comes to be here?”

Jarvis did not like to tell Mr. Johnstone that his great wealth was his recommendation, so he evaded the question by inquiring which of his guns he would use that day.

“Oh, bother the guns,” was the response, “I don’t want to kill anything this beautiful morning. Here, Jarvis, quick!” he called suddenly from the window, “who is that lady driving the ponies?”

“That, sir, is the Lady Evelyn Beeton, daughter of the late Earl of Kingswood.”

“Is she very poor, Jarvis?” inquired Mr. Johnstone, after a substantial sigh indicative of dampened hopes at hearing the lady’s title.

“No, sir, she is reported to be quite wealthy, as she succeeded to the old Earl’s property, excepting the estates which, being entailed in the male line, passed to his nephew.”

“I’m sorry to hear it, Jarvis, deuced sorry, for that is the only woman

I could ever have loved. Funny thing to tell you, isn't it, but then you are in a way my confidential adviser in this strange, God-forsaken country, and I know you would never split on me, for if you did, Jarvis, I would break your blessed neck to a certainty."

"Yes, sir," replied the complaisant Jarvis, by way of acknowledging the other's kind intentions.

"No, sir," resumed Mr. Felix Johnstone with a burst of enthusiasm, "I'm not one of these men who have all their life long been trailing their hearts through the streets and highways for every thoughtless miss to trample on; my heart is a virgin field to be harvested only by one woman in this world, and if she won't have it so, then, Jarvis, the grain has got to rot on the ground, that's all. Now, Jarvis, there is something about the lady's voice and look which stirs me like a trumpet. I sat opposite her at dinner last night, and the mistakes I made in consequence are something awful to contemplate. You see, Jarvis, she is not too young. She is, I imagine, about thirty----

"She is thirty-two, sir," respectfully corrected Jarvis, closing a Burke's Peerage at which he had been glancing.

"Well, now, it strikes me, my friend," retorted his master, with a flush on his brow, "that you are infernally precise about the Lady Evelyn Beeton's age. May I take the liberty of inquiring, sir, how you came to know it exactly--just to a hair, as it were?"

There was fire in the master's eye, but the well-trained valet answered with stoical calm. "Her ladyship's age is in the Peerage; sir, I thought it might interest you to know."

The answer was mollifying, but the little outburst called for a lull in the conversation, and Mr. Johnstone, now fully dressed, stood in silence looking out at the window, while the valet busied himself about his master's effects with unruffled brow.

"She has such a high-bred and refined air, and such a soft and musical voice, and her eyes, what wonderful color and expression! And then the figure, so graceful, and yet so rounded. She ought to be a queen, and there I'm only a common Australian squatter and digger."

Such was the murmuring monotone which rolled musically from the massive throat of Felix Johnstone by the window.

"Well--I'm--consumed," he suddenly shouted, "if that jackanapes Howard hasn't got into the pony chaise beside her! My hat, Jarvis, quick!"

But soon he reined his fury's pace. "After all, it is no business of mine," he resumed, "besides, what could an uncultivated clod like me

have in common with a noble refined lady like that! Now if she were only poor or in need of a friend, and,” warming to his work, “in danger of her life, there would be some show for me, but as it is, my case is simply hopeless,” with which moody reflections Mr. Johnstone slowly wended his way downstairs to a late breakfast.

He found Miss Maud, the daughter of the house, presiding at the breakfast table, with that radiant look and well groomed air peculiar to English country girls, and by and by, when they were left alone, he managed to turn the conversation to the object of his adoration.

“We think all the world of her,” remarked his companion. “She is one of nature’s true noble-women. She gave up the best years of her life to her invalid father, and now I suppose she will never marry.”

“Why it seems to me,” quickly replied Johnstone, “that young fellow Howard is paying her marked attention. And he is quite young and very good-looking.”

This sentence bore so dismal a tone that Miss Maud looked up, and after regarding the speaker with a demure glance, she arose from the table simultaneously with her *_vis-à-vis_*, and thereby terminated the morning meal.

As she saw Mr. Johnstone standing on the steps a few minutes later, in a listless attitude uncommon in so stalwart and well-knit a figure, she remarked to herself, “and so you are caught, my handsome but unsophisticated Antipodian.”

That evening at dinner an accident occurred which, for a time, assumed the dimensions of a calamity. Colonel Ponsonby-Fitzwaring, it must be stated, was lord lieutenant of the county in which he lived, and although he bore no title he occupied a position and lived in a style unsurpassed by any titled magnate within a hundred miles. Dinners at the Hall under his *_régime_* assumed the importance of State festivals, and the order of precedence was as carefully observed as at any court ceremony.

At eight o’clock, when the dining-room’s stately doors were thrown wide open, it was accordingly a brilliant procession which Colonel Fitzwaring--albeit still somewhat shaky from the gout--headed with the worthy Bishop’s lady on his arm. Mrs. Penelope Broadbent was proud of her revered husband, and she was, subject to no deductions, proud, also, of herself. She was a lady of magnificent quantities, and if none of her numerous admirers used the word “stately” in describing her, it was probably because her wealth of proportion was other than perpendicular. If a great and artistic photographer had had to choose as to the best means of getting a really accurate and comprehensive likeness of Mrs. Penelope Broadbent, it is probable that he would have decided on a

bird's-eye view as having many points of advantage.

The lady, although of somewhat ardent complexion, affected the most delicate conceivable shades of dress, probably by the way of contrast. The latter was certainly sufficiently startling. On this particular evening the dress which sheltered and adorned, without qualifying, the tropical super-abundance of the bishop's greater half, was a delicate primrose satin, and it shimmered and billowed in the softened light like waves of embodied chastity, while above it rose and fell a tossing wave of glittering jewels, the Broadbent historic gems, the envy, it was said, of Royalty itself.

The Bishop's lady, as became her rank, sat at the right hand of the host, while her benign and dignified lord sat next to the hostess at the bottom of the table.

How it came about will probably never be known with absolute accuracy, but just as a staid and dignified footman was about to hand a plate of turtle soup to Mrs. Broadbent, the gentleman on her right--our friend Mr. Felix Johnstone--was observed to be searching wildly for his handkerchief. Alas! unfamiliarity with the geography of pockets in dress clothes, and a hazy recollection that a table napkin should never be placed to the nose, and the result was that Mr. Johnstone's sneeze--a thing known and dreaded along a hundred miles of Australian coast--burst upon the dinner-table like the crack of doom. So weird, so awful, so unspeakable, and ear-splitting a sneeze had surely never been heard since the world began!

The footman, on Mr. Johnstone's left, utterly demoralized, dropped his plate of soup where he stood, by the chair of the Bishop's wife, and the contents, rich, dark, tenacious, fell on the ripe, warm shoulders of the shrieking, half-scalded victim, and rolled in an oily river down the palpitating, outraged bosom, and all athwart the delicate, primrose tinted garment.

The scene now beggared description. Mr. Felix Johnstone, also bespattered by the waiter's munificence, for which he was devoutly grateful, as it gave him an excuse for leaving the table, walked to the door as if he expected to be hanged outside. As he bowed himself out with a calm born of the supremest desperation, three glances were daguerreotyped on his brain--the flaming visage of the Bishop burning with a look of very unapostolic rage; the amused and cynical smile of Mr. Elphinstone Howard ("I've seen you before, where?" flashed the thought and inquiry through the unhappy one's brain), and last, a look of distress and commiseration directed toward him by Lady Evelyn. That last glance was one of resuscitation in its effects, and was painful, as such always are.

"O the pity of it!" the unhappy man murmured. "But for this awful

occurrence she might have grown to care for me, but no woman ever forgave a man for making himself so ridiculous.”

“Jarvis,” he shouted as he entered his rooms, “bring me Bradshaw’s Railway Guide.”

“Yes, sir, I see you have had an accident, won’t you change your clothes, sir, before you return to the dining-room?”

“Jarvis, you are an idiot, do I look like a man who is about to return to a dining-room? I want you to find me the earliest train that starts for the North Pole, and if you don’t catch it, you’ll catch something else; that, I can promise you.”

Jarvis was a discreet servant of vast experience, and the train which he did look up, found its terminus in Euston Square, London.

“There is no train to-night, sir,” was all he said, as he closed his Bradshaw.

An hour later Dick, the son and heir of the family, entered his friend’s room, and after carefully closing the door and seeing Jarvis out of the way, he sat down opposite his friend and gave himself up to great and unrestrained laughter--laughing until the tears ran down his cheeks and until he rolled off his chair through weakness.

“The sight of that old girl!” he exclaimed irreverently between his paroxysms, “will last me till I die. She was clothed with soup as with a garment, and had more on than I ever saw her wear before at table. By Jove, Johnstone, you have rendered yourself immortal.”

“That’s right, old man, laugh your fill; but all the same, the thing has done for me. I shall leave here in the morning.”

“Now look here,” returned Dick with an approach to gravity in his manner; “that is precisely the very thing you must not do. My brain is small, but what there is of it is clear, and I know just what is going to happen. By to-morrow morning every one concerned in the accident, and most of all the Bishop and his wife, will be anxious to have the whole thing forgotten, and everything placed on its old footing. That is their only chance of escaping being made the laughing-stock of every county meeting within a hundred miles. Fancy it’s getting wind that you had run away because you had been the means of having the Bishop’s wife smothered with turtle soup while in a very décolléte condition! Why, people would say it was judgment on the exuberant old dame. No, old chap, stay where you are and I’ll guarantee you absolution both from Bishop and dame.”

The other sat in silence for a while, and presently Dick continued, “By

the way, if it is not too delicate a question, was there any special cause for that unique sneeze, and is that about your usual figure?"

The other winced for a moment, and then slowly answered, "That sneeze is my infirmity, but it does not spring from a cold. Ever since my earliest recollection the smell of musk has caused me to sneeze in just that way, and I noticed the scent of that perfume at table just before the attack came on. I was told in Australia that a very slight operation on the nostril, if skillfully performed, would cure the tendency to sneeze, and I thought I would try some specialist in London, but it is so long since I had one of the spasms that I imagined I was outgrowing them."

Mr. Johnstone's reception the following day bore out his friend's prophecy. The Bishop and his wife were cordial in the extreme and by common consent the unwelcome subject was tabooed. Indeed the affair was overshadowed by an occurrence of a much more serious character.

Mrs. Broadbent's jewels, to which reference has already been made, were discovered to have been stolen during the night. The shock which followed the announcement was intensified by the discovery that other jewels were missing. The stolen gems had been locked in a despatch box which was kept in the dressing-room adjoining the Bishop's bedroom, and in the morning the box was found open and rifled of its contents. As the diamonds taken were of immense value it was deemed advisable to send to Scotland Yard for a London detective, and a telegram had been received promising the arrival of the detective the following morning.

In the closer companionship which crime always induces among the innocent within its orbit, Mr. Felix Johnstone found opportunities of conversation with the Lady Evelyn Beeton, and it is a pleasure to note that the lady found many solid attractions in the Colonist. He was different from the men of her acquaintance--more natural, more manly, less frivolous--in a word altogether more acceptable as a companion than her more polished friends.

In the result our hero sought his couch that night with very different feelings from those with which he had encountered it the previous night.

"About the North Pole, sir?" Jarvis had inquired, and his master's reply was, "Jarvis, if you mention that vegetable or mineral again, you'll lose your place. You leave that pole alone!"

And presently he slept the sleep of the just.

It was probably 2 A.M. when the door of Mr. Felix Johnstone's bedroom opened softly and a male figure stole in on tiptoe. The light burned low in a night lamp, but that did not embarrass the intruder, who carried a dark lantern of his own. The sleeper's face was turned from the door, and his breathing was deep and regular. Poising himself on his tiptoes,

as if ready either to advance or fly, the intruder paused for a moment and regarded the sleeper attentively. Apparently the scrutiny was satisfactory, for the burglar now advanced noiselessly in his list slippers to a stout portmanteau, and as he laid his hand on the lock he murmured, "I know him of old; he always carries heaps of money with him." The better to facilitate his operations he laid a jewelry case, which he was carrying in his hand, on the dressing-table, while he took a bunch of skeleton keys from his pocket. With the keys a cambric handkerchief was drawn out, and instantly the room was filled with a pungent odor of musk. The subdued jingle of the keys, or some other influence, troubled the sleeper, who moved uneasily. Warily the burglar stooped over him with the aromatic handkerchief, which he had just picked up, in his hand. Instantly the closed eyes opened wide, and ere the burglar could even move his hand there burst on the silence of the night that stupendous and unearthly sneeze. It had seemed terrible beyond measure in the crowded noisy room; but here, in the midnight silence, its intensity and immensity baffled all description.

Instantly Johnstone, now fully awake, bounded to his feet, and being nearer to the door than the burglar, he shut and locked it, and turned to confront the intruder, who in his affright and surprise had turned the light of his dark lantern on the room and on himself. "Whew!" exclaimed the astonished Australian, who recognized in the man before him not only the elegant Howard Elphinstone whose face had puzzled him long, but also Red Winthrop, a notorious Melbourne burglar, whom he had once been the means of "sending up" for a term of years.

"Don't you think you have tempted your luck once too often, Red Winthrop?" inquired Johnstone grimly, as he faced the other with the bed between them.

The other's eyes gave a dangerous gleam, but he said nothing. He only shook his wrist sharply, and a long bowie-knife lay in his palm. But for an instant, however. The next moment it flew with unerring aim at the other's throat. Perhaps Johnstone should have been more on his guard, still his quick eye noted the danger, although not in time altogether to avert it. The willing blade hewed a deep rut along the side of the jaw, missing the jugular vein by a hair's breadth, and passing on went straight through a pier glass and stuck quivering in the wood at the back of the glass. As the latter shivered, Johnstone, unmindful of his wound, called out "Seven years' bad luck for you, Winthrop," and vaulting across the bed he closed with the ex-convict, whom, after a short but sharp struggle, he succeeded in tying, hands and feet.

Meanwhile the whole household, aroused by the unearthly noise, was pounding at the door. When the latter was opened, a combined scream burst from the assembled guests. Johnstone was standing over the ex-convict in a pool of his own blood, which stained the white bed-clothes and even the walls of the room.

Little more will suffice. The casket left on Mr. Johnstone's table contained the Lady Evelyn's diamonds stolen that night. In the prisoner's rooms were found Mrs. Broadbent's jewels intact, and also those stolen from the other visitors.

Mr. Johnstone was in danger for some time from the excessive loss of blood, and when finally he managed to leave his room he did so, not only to find himself a general hero to all the folks at the Hall, but a very especial and particular kind of a hero to a certain Lady Evelyn Beeton.

When in process of time the mutual admiration between these two was crystallized in a happy union, the worthy Bishop tied the knot with an unction as ripe and gracious as ever the church sanctioned, while madame beamed on the alliance with a radiant effulgence which eclipsed and dwarfed all the surrounding objects.

Shortly after the recovery of our Australian friend he testified against Red Winthrop, and as that talented gentleman received his sentence of seven years' transportation, Mr. Johnstone dryly remarked, "You shouldn't break looking-glasses, Winthrop; I told you it meant seven years' bad luck."

It is only right to add that although our friend the Australian had sneezed himself back into favor after sneezing himself out of it, he rightly felt that so fateful a blast was a dangerous and uncertain possession, and, after a time, he took competent advice on the subject with the result that he now no longer dreads the musk odor which used to be his *_bête noir_*.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *My Friend Pasquale and other stories*, by James Selwin Tait

THE BIRD ON ITS JOURNEY,

By Beatrice Harraden

It was about four in the afternoon when a young girl came into the salon of the little hotel at C---- in Switzerland, and drew her chair up to the fire.

"You are soaked through," said an elderly lady, who was herself trying to get roasted. "You ought to lose no time in changing your clothes."

"I have not anything to change," said the young girl, laughing. "Oh, I shall soon be dry!"

"Have you lost all your luggage?" asked the lady, sympathetically.

"No," said the young girl; "I had none to lose." And she smiled a little mischievously, as though she knew by instinct that her companion's sympathy would at once degenerate into suspicion!

"I don't mean to say that I have not a knapsack," she added, considerably. "I have walked a long distance--in fact, from Z----."

"And where did you leave your companions?" asked the lady, with a touch of forgiveness in her voice.

"I am without companions, just as I am without luggage," laughed the girl.

And then she opened the piano, and struck a few notes. There was something caressing in the way in which she touched the keys; whoever she was, she knew how to make sweet music; sad music, too, full of that undefinable longing, like the holding out of one's arms to one's friends in the hopeless distance.

The lady bending over the fire looked up at the little girl, and forgot that she had brought neither friends nor luggage with her. She hesitated for one moment, and then she took the childish face between her hands and kissed it.

"Thank you, dear, for your music," she said, gently.

"The piano is terribly out of tune," said the little girl, suddenly; and she ran out of the room, and came back carrying her knapsack.

"What are you going to do?" asked her companion.

"I am going to tune the piano," the little girl said; and she took a tuning-hammer out of her knapsack, and began her work in real earnest. She evidently knew what she was about, and pegged away at the notes as though her whole life depended upon the result.

The lady by the fire was lost in amazement. Who could she be? Without luggage and without friends, and with a tuning-hammer!

Meanwhile one of the gentlemen had strolled into the salon; but hearing the sound of tuning, and being in secret possession of nerves, he fled, saying, "The tuner, by Jove!"

A few minutes afterward Miss Blake, whose nerves were no secret possession, hastened into the salon, and, in her usual imperious fashion, demanded instant silence.

"I have just done," said the little girl. "The piano was so terribly out of tune, I could not resist the temptation."

Miss Blake, who never listened to what any one said, took it for granted that the little girl was the tuner for whom M. le Proprietaire had promised to send; and having bestowed on her a condescending nod, passed out into the garden, where she told some of the visitors that the piano had been tuned at last, and that the tuner was a young woman of rather eccentric appearance.

"Really, it is quite abominable how women thrust themselves into every profession," she remarked, in her masculine voice. "It is so unfeminine, so unseemly."

There was nothing of the feminine about Miss Blake; her horse-cloth dress, her waistcoat and high collar, and her billycock hat were of the masculine genus; even her nerves could not be called feminine, since we learn from two or three doctors (taken off their guard) that nerves are neither feminine nor masculine, but common.

"I should like to see this tuner," said one of the tennis-players, leaning against a tree.

"Here she comes," said Miss Blake, as the little girl was seen sauntering into the garden.

The men put up their eye-glasses, and saw a little lady with a childish face and soft brown hair, of strictly feminine appearance and bearing. The goat came toward her and began nibbling at her frock. She seemed to understand the manner of goats, and played with him to his heart's content. One of the tennis players, Oswald Everard by name, strolled down to the bank where she was having her frolic.

"Good-afternoon," he said, raising his cap. "I hope the goat is not worrying you. Poor little fellow! this is his last day of play. He is to be killed to-morrow for _table d'hote_."

"What a shame!" she said. "Fancy to be killed, and then grumbled at!"

"That is precisely what we do here," he said, laughing. "We grumble at everything we eat. And I own to being one of the grumpiest; though the lady in the horse-cloth dress yonder follows close upon my heels."

"She was the lady who was annoyed at me because I tuned the piano," the little girl said. "Still, it had to be done. It was plainly my duty. I seemed to have come for that purpose."

"It has been confoundedly annoying having it out of tune," he said.

"I've had to give up singing altogether. But what a strange profession you have chosen! Very unusual, isn't it?"

"Why, surely not," she answered, amused. "It seems to me that every other woman has taken to it. The wonder to me is that any one ever scores a success. Nowadays, however, no one could amass a huge fortune out of it."

"No one, indeed!" replied Oswald Everard, laughing. "What on earth made you take to it?"

"It took to me," she said simply. "It wrapped me round with enthusiasm. I could think of nothing else. I vowed that I would rise to the top of my profession. I worked day and night. But it means incessant toil for years if one wants to make any headway."

"Good gracious! I thought it was merely a matter of a few months," he said, smiling at the little girl.

"A few months!" she repeated, scornfully. "You are speaking the language of an amateur. No; one has to work faithfully year after year; to grasp the possibilities, and pass on to greater possibilities. You imagine what it must feel like to touch the notes, and know that you are keeping the listeners spellbound; that you are taking them into a fairy-land of sound, where petty personality is lost in vague longing and regret."

"I confess I had not thought of it in that way," he said, humbly. "I have only regarded it as a necessary every-day evil; and to be quite honest with you, I fail to see now how it can inspire enthusiasm. I wish I could see," he added, looking up at the engaging little figure before him.

"Never mind," she said, laughing at his distress; "I forgive you. And, after all, you are not the only person who looks upon it as a necessary evil. My poor old guardian abominated it. He made many sacrifices to come and listen to me. He knew I liked to see his kind old face, and that the presence of a real friend inspired me with confidence."

"I should not have thought it was nervous work," he said.

"Try it and see," she answered. "But surely you spoke of singing. Are you not nervous when you sing?"

"Sometimes," he replied, rather stiffly. "But that is slightly different." (He was very proud of his singing, and made a great fuss about it.) "Your profession, as I remarked before, is an unavoidable nuisance. When I think what I have suffered from the gentlemen of your profession, I only wonder that I have any brains left. But I am uncourteous."

"No, no," she said; "let me hear about your sufferings."

"Whenever I have specially wanted to be quiet," he said--and then he glanced at her childish little face, and he hesitated. "It seems so rude of me," he added. He was the soul of courtesy, although he was an amateur tenor singer.

"Please tell me," the little girl said, in her winning way.

"Well," he said, gathering himself together, "it is the one subject on which I can be eloquent. Ever since I can remember, I have been worried and tortured by those rascals. I have tried in every way to escape from them, but there is no hope for me. Yes; I believe that all the tuners in the universe are in league against me, and have marked me out for their special prey."

"_All the what_?" asked the little girl, with a jerk in her voice.

"All the tuners, of course," he replied, rather snappishly. "I know that we cannot do without them; but good heavens! they have no tact, no consideration, no mercy. Whenever I've wanted to write or read quietly, that fatal knock has come at the door, and I've known by instinct that all chance of peace was over. Whenever I've been giving a luncheon party, the tuner has arrived, with his abominable black bag, and his abominable card which has to be signed at once. On one occasion I was just proposing to a girl in her father's library when the tuner struck up in the drawing-room. I left off suddenly, and fled from the house. But there is no escape from these fiends; I believe they are swarming about in the air like so many bacteria. And how, in the name of goodness, you should deliberately choose to be one of them, and should be so enthusiastic over your work, puzzles me beyond all words. Don't say that you carry a black bag, and present cards which have to be filled up at the most inconvenient time; don't--"

He stopped suddenly, for the little girl was convulsed with laughter. She laughed until the tears rolled down her cheeks, and then she dried her eyes and laughed again.

"Excuse me," she said; "I can't help myself; it's so funny."

"It may be funny to you," he said, laughing in spite of himself; "but it is not funny to me."

"Of course it isn't," she replied, making a desperate effort to be serious. "Well, tell me something more about these tuners."

"Not another word," he said, gallantly. "I am ashamed of myself as it is. Come to the end of the garden, and let me show you the view down

into the valley."

She had conquered her fit of merriment, but her face wore a settled look of mischief, and she was evidently the possessor of some secret joke. She seemed in capital health and spirits, and had so much to say that was bright and interesting that Oswald Everard found himself becoming reconciled to the whole race of tuners. He was amazed to learn that she had walked all the way from Z----, and quite alone, too.

"Oh, I don't think anything of that," she said; "I had a splendid time, and I caught four rare butterflies. I would not have missed those for anything. As for the going about by myself, that is a second nature. Besides, I do not belong to any one. That has its advantages, and I suppose its disadvantages; but at present I have only discovered the advantages. The disadvantages will discover themselves!"

"I believe you are what the novels call an advanced young woman," he said. "Perhaps you give lectures on woman's suffrage, or something of that sort?"

"I have very often mounted the platform," she answered. "In fact, I am never so happy as when addressing an immense audience. A most unfeminine thing to do, isn't it? What would the lady yonder in the horse-cloth dress and billycock hat say? Don't you think you ought to go and help her drive away the goat? She looks so frightened. She interests me deeply. I wonder whether she has written an essay on the feminine in woman. I should like to read it; it would do me so much good."

"You are at least a true woman," he said, laughing, "for I see you can be spiteful. The tuning has not driven that away."

"Ah, I had forgotten about the tuning," she answered, brightly; "but now you remind me, I have been seized with a great idea."

"Won't you tell it to me?" he asked.

"No," she answered; "I keep my great ideas for myself, and work them out in secret. And this one is particularly amusing. What fun I shall have!"

"But why keep the fun to yourself?" he said. "We all want to be amused here; we all want to be stirred up; a little fun would be a charity."

"Very well, since you wish it, you shall be stirred up," she answered; "but you must give me time to work out my great idea. I do not hurry about things, not even about my professional duties; for I have a strong feeling that it is vulgar to be always amassing riches! As I have neither a husband nor a brother to support, I have chosen less wealth, and more leisure to enjoy all the loveliness of life! So you see I take my time about everything. And to-morrow I shall catch butterflies at my

leisure, and lie among the dear old pines, and work at my great idea."

"I shall catch butterflies," said her companion; "and I too shall lie among the dear old pines."

"Just as you please," she said; and at that moment the _table d'hôte_ bell rang.

The little girl hastened to the bureau, and spoke rapidly in German to the cashier.

"_Ach, Fraulein_!" he said. "You are not really serious?"

"Yes, I am," she said. "I don't want them to know my name. It will only worry me. Say I am the young lady who tuned the piano."

She had scarcely given these directions and mounted to her room when Oswald Everard, who was much interested in his mysterious companion, came to the bureau, and asked for the name of the little lady.

"_Es ist das Fraulein welches das Piano gestimmt hat_," answered the man, returning with unusual quickness to his account-book.

No one spoke to the little girl at _table d'hôte_, but for all that she enjoyed her dinner, and gave her serious attention to all the courses. Being thus solidly occupied, she had not much leisure to bestow on the conversation of the other guests. Nor was it specially original; it treated of the short-comings of the chef, the tastelessness of the soup, the toughness of the beef, and all the many failings which go to complete a mountain hotel dinner. But suddenly, so it seemed to the little girl, this time-honoured talk passed into another phase; she heard the word "music" mentioned, and she became at once interested to learn what these people had to say on a subject which was dearer to her than any other.

"For my own part," said a stern-looking old man, "I have no words to describe what a gracious comfort music has been to me all my life. It is the noblest language which man may understand and speak. And I sometimes think that those who know it, or know something of it, are able at rare moments to find an answer to life's perplexing problems."

The little girl looked up from her plate. Robert Browning's words rose to her lips, but she did not give them utterance:

God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason, and welcome; 'tis we musicians know.

"I have lived through a long life," said another elderly man, "and have therefore had my share of trouble; but the grief of being obliged to

give up music was the grief which held me longest, or which perhaps has never left me. I still crave for the gracious pleasure of touching once more the strings of the violoncello, and hearing the dear, tender voice singing and throbbing, and answering even to such poor skill as mine. I still yearn to take my part in concerted music, and be one of those privileged to play Beethoven's string-quartettes. But that will have to be in another incarnation, I think."

He glanced at his shrunken arm, and then, as though ashamed of this allusion to his own personal infirmity, he added hastily:

"But when the first pang of such a pain is over, there remains the comfort of being a listener. At first one does not think it is a comfort; but as time goes on there is no resisting its magic influence. And Lowell said rightly that 'one of God's great charities is music.'"

"I did not know you were musical, Mr. Keith," said an English lady. "You have never before spoken of music."

"Perhaps not, madam," he answered. "One does not often speak of what one cares for most of all. But when I am in London I rarely miss hearing our best players."

At this point others joined in, and the various merits of eminent pianists were warmly discussed.

"What a wonderful name that little English lady has made for herself!" said the major, who was considered an authority on all subjects. "I would go anywhere to hear Miss Thyra Flowerdew. We all ought to be very proud of her. She has taken even the German musical world by storm, and they say her recitals at Paris have been brilliantly successful. I myself have heard her at New York, Leipsic, London, Berlin, and even Chicago."

The little girl stirred uneasily in her chair.

"I don't think Miss Flowerdew has ever been to Chicago," she said.

There was a dead silence. The admirer of Miss Thyra Flowerdew looked much annoyed, and twiddled his watch-chain. He had meant to say "Philadelphia," but he did not think it necessary to own to his mistake.

"What impertinence!" said one of the ladies to Miss Blake. "What can she know about it? Is she not the young person who tuned the piano?"

"Perhaps she tunes Miss Thyra Flowerdew's piano!" suggested Miss Blake, in a loud whisper.

"You are right, madam," said the little girl, quietly. "I have often tuned Miss Flowerdew's piano."

There was another embarrassing silence; and then a lovely old lady, whom every one revered, came to the rescue.

"I think her playing is simply superb," she said. "Nothing that I ever hear satisfies me so entirely. She has all the tenderness of an angel's touch."

"Listening to her," said the major, who had now recovered from his annoyance at being interrupted, "one becomes unconscious of her presence, for she is the music itself. And that is rare. It is but seldom nowadays that we are allowed to forget the personality of the player. And yet her personality is an unusual one; having once seen her, it would not be easy to forget her. I should recognise her anywhere."

As he spoke, he glanced at the little tuner, and could not help admiring her dignified composure under circumstances which might have been distressing to any one; and when she rose with the others he followed her, and said stiffly:

"I regret that I was the indirect cause of putting you in an awkward position."

"It is really of no consequence," she said, brightly. "If you think I was impertinent, I ask your forgiveness. I did not mean to be officious. The words were spoken before I was aware of them."

She passed into the salon, where she found a quiet corner for herself, and read some of the newspapers. No one took the slightest notice of her; not a word was spoken to her; but when she relieved the company of her presence her impertinence was commented on.

"I am sorry that she heard what I said," remarked Miss Blake; "but she did not seem to mind. These young women who go out into the world lose the edge of their sensitiveness and femininity. I have always observed that."

"How much they are spared then!" answered some one.

Meanwhile the little girl slept soundly. She had merry dreams, and finally woke up laughing. She hurried over her breakfast, and then stood ready to go for a butterfly hunt. She looked thoroughly happy, and evidently had found, and was holding tightly, the key to life's enjoyment.

Oswald Everard was waiting on the balcony, and he reminded her that he intended to go with her.

"Come along then," she answered; "we must not lose a moment."

They caught butterflies; they picked flowers; they ran; they lingered by the wayside; they sang; they climbed, and he marvelled at her easy speed. Nothing seemed to tire her, and everything seemed to delight her--the flowers, the birds, the clouds, the grasses, and the fragrance of the pine woods.

"Is it not good to live?" she cried. "Is it not splendid to take in the scented air? Draw in as many long breaths as you can. Isn't it good? Don't you feel now as though you were ready to move mountains? I do. What a dear old nurse Nature is! How she pets us, and gives us the best of her treasures!"

Her happiness invaded Oswald Everard's soul, and he felt like a school-boy once more, rejoicing in a fine day and his liberty, with nothing to spoil the freshness of the air, and nothing to threaten the freedom of the moment.

"Is it not good to live?" he cried. "Yes, indeed it is, if we know how to enjoy."

They had come upon some haymakers, and the little girl hastened up to help them, laughing and talking to the women, and helping them to pile up the hay on the shoulders of a broad-backed man, who then conveyed his burden to a pear-shaped stack. Oswald Everard watched his companion for a moment, and then, quite forgetting his dignity as an amateur tenor singer, he too lent his aid, and did not leave off until his companion sank exhausted on the ground.

"Oh," she laughed, "what delightful work for a very short time! Come along; let us go into that brown chatlet yonder and ask for some milk. I am simply parched with thirst. Thank you, but I prefer to carry my own flowers."

"What an independent little lady you are!" he said.

"It is quite necessary in our profession, I can assure you," she said, with a tone of mischief in her voice. "That reminds me that my profession is evidently not looked upon with any favour by the visitors at the hotel. I am heartbroken to think that I have not won the esteem of that lady in the billycock hat. What will she say to you for coming out with me? And what will she say of me for allowing you to come? I wonder whether she will say, 'How unfeminine!' I wish I could hear her!"

"I don't suppose you care," he said. "You seem to be a wild little bird."

"I don't care what a person of that description says," replied his companion.

"What on earth made you contradict the major at dinner last night?" he asked. "I was not at the table, but some one told me of the incident; and I felt very sorry about it. What could you know of Miss Thyra Flowerdew?"

"Well, considering that she is in my profession, of course I know something about her," said the little girl.

"Confound it all!" he said, rather rudely. "Surely there is some difference between the bellows-blower and the organist."

"Absolutely none," she answered; "merely a variation of the original theme!"

As she spoke she knocked at the door of the chalet, and asked the old dame to give them some milk. They sat in the _Stube_, and the little girl looked about, and admired the spinning-wheel and the quaint chairs and the queer old jugs and the pictures on the walls.

"Ah, but you shall see the other room," the old peasant woman said; and she led them into a small apartment which was evidently intended for a study. It bore evidences of unusual taste and care, and one could see that some loving hand had been trying to make it a real sanctum of refinement. There was even a small piano. A carved book-rack was fastened to the wall.

The old dame did not speak at first; she gave her guests time to recover from the astonishment which she felt they must be experiencing; then she pointed proudly to the piano.

"I bought that for my daughters," she said, with a strange mixture of sadness and triumph. "I wanted to keep them at home with me, and I saved and saved, and got enough money to buy the piano. They had always wanted to have one, and I thought they would then stay with me. They liked music and books, and I knew they would be glad to have a room of their own where they might read and play and study; and so I gave them this corner."

"Well, mother," asked the little girl, "and where are they this afternoon?"

"Ah," she answered sadly, "they did not care to stay; but it was natural enough, and I was foolish to grieve. Besides, they come to see me."

"And then they play to you?" asked the little girl, gently.

"They say the piano is out of tune," the old dame said. "I don't know. Perhaps you can tell."

The little girl sat down to the piano, and struck a few chords.

"Yes," she said; "it is badly out of tune. Give me the tuning-hammer. I am sorry," she added, smiling at Oswald Everard, "but I cannot neglect my duty. Don't wait for me."

"I will wait for you," he said, sullenly; and he went into the balcony and smoked his pipe, and tried to possess his soul in patience.

When she had faithfully done her work she played a few simple melodies, such as she knew the old woman would love and understand; and she turned away when she saw that the listener's eyes were moist.

"Play once again," the old woman whispered. "I am dreaming of beautiful things."

So the little tuner touched the keys again with all the tenderness of an angel.

"Tell your daughters," she said, as she rose to say good-bye, "that the piano is now in good tune. Then they will play to you the next time they come."

"I shall always remember you, mademoiselle," the old woman said; and, almost unconsciously, she took the childish face and kissed it.

Oswald Everard was waiting in the hay-field for his companion; and when she apologised to him for this little professional intermezzo, as she called it, he recovered from his sulkiness and readjusted his nerves, which the noise of the tuning had somewhat disturbed.

"It was very good of you to tune the old dame's piano," he said, looking at her with renewed interest.

"Some one had to do it, of course," she answered, brightly, "and I am glad the chance fell to me. What a comfort it is to think that the next time those daughters come to see her they will play to her and make her very happy! Poor old dear!"

"You puzzle me greatly," he said. "I cannot for the life of me think what made you choose your calling. You must have many gifts; any one who talks with you must see that at once. And you play quite nicely, too."

"I am sorry that my profession sticks in your throat," she answered. "Do be thankful that I am nothing worse than a tuner. For I might be something worse--a snob, for instance."

And, so speaking, she dashed after a butterfly, and left him to recover

from her words. He was conscious of having deserved a reproof; and when at last he overtook her he said as much, and asked for her kind indulgence.

"I forgive you," she said, laughing. "You and I are not looking at things from the same point of view; but we have had a splendid morning together, and I have enjoyed every minute of it. And to-morrow I go on my way."

"And to-morrow you go," he repeated. "Can it not be the day after to-morrow?"

"I am a bird of passage," she said, shaking her head. "You must not seek to detain me. I have taken my rest, and off I go to other climes."

They had arrived at the hotel, and Oswald Everard saw no more of his companion until the evening, when she came down rather late for table d'hôte. She hurried over her dinner and went into the salon. She closed the door, and sat down to the piano, and lingered there without touching the keys; once or twice she raised her hands, and then she let them rest on the notes, and, half unconsciously, they began to move and make sweet music; and then they drifted into Schumann's "Abendlied," and then the little girl played some of his "Kinderscenen," and some of his "Fantasie Stucke," and some of his songs.

Her touch and feeling were exquisite, and her phrasing betrayed the true musician. The strains of music reached the dining-room, and, one by one, the guests came creeping in, moved by the music and anxious to see the musician.

The little girl did not look up; she was in a Schumann mood that evening, and only the players of Schumann know what enthralling possession he takes of their very spirit. All the passion and pathos and wildness and longing had found an inspired interpreter; and those who listened to her were held by the magic which was her own secret, and which had won for her such honour as comes only to the few. She understood Schumann's music, and was at her best with him.

Had she, perhaps, chosen to play his music this evening because she wished to be at her best? Or was she merely being impelled by an overwhelming force within her? Perhaps it was something of both.

Was she wishing to humiliate these people who had received her so coldly? This little girl was only human; perhaps there was something of that feeling too. Who can tell? But she played as she had never played in London, or Paris, or Berlin, or New York, or Philadelphia.

At last she arrived at the "Carnaval," and those who heard her declared

afterward that they had never listened to a more magnificent rendering. The tenderness was so restrained; the vigour was so refined. When the last notes of that spirited "Marche des Davidsbundler contre les Philistins" had died away, she glanced at Oswald Everard, who was standing near her almost dazed.

"And now my favourite piece of all," she said; and she at once began the "Second Novelette," the finest of the eight, but seldom played in public.

What can one say of the wild rush of the leading theme, and the pathetic longing of the intermezzo?

. . . The murmuring dying notes,
That fall as soft as snow on the sea;

and

The passionate strain that, deeply going,
Refines the bosom it trembles through.

What can one say of those vague aspirations and finest thoughts which possess the very dullest among us when such music as that which the little girl had chosen catches us and keeps us, if only for a passing moment, but that moment of the rarest worth and loveliness in our unlovely lives?

What can one say of the highest music except that, like death, it is the great leveller: it gathers us all to its tender keeping--and we rest.

The little girl ceased playing. There was not a sound to be heard; the magic was still holding her listeners. When at last they had freed themselves with a sigh, they pressed forward to greet her.

"There is only one person who can play like that," cried the major, with sudden inspiration--"she is Miss Thyra Flowerdew."

The little girl smiled.

"That is my name," she said, simply; and she slipped out of the room.

The next morning, at an early hour, the bird of passage took her flight onward, but she was not destined to go off unobserved. Oswald Everard saw the little figure swinging along the road, and she overtook her.

"You little wild bird!" he said. "And so this was your great idea--to have your fun out of us all, and then play to us and make us feel I don't know how, and then to go."

"You said the company wanted stirring up," she answered, "and I rather fancy I have stirred them up."

"And what do you suppose you have done for me?" he asked.

"I hope I have proved to you that the bellows-blower and the organist are sometimes identical," she answered.

But he shook his head.

"Little wild bird," he said, "you have given me a great idea, and I will tell you what it is: _to tame you_. So good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye," she said. "But wild birds are not so easily tamed."

Then she waved her hand over her head, and went on her way singing.

Project Gutenberg's *Stories By English Authors: Germany*, by Various

THE END OF NEW YORK

BY PARK BENJAMIN.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE WAR CLOUD.

Towards dusk on the afternoon of Monday, December 5th, 1881, the French steamer "Canada," from Havre, arrived at her pier in New York City. Among the passengers was a tall, dark, rather fine-looking man, of about middle-age. After the usual examination of his baggage by the Custom House officials had been made, this person, accompanied by a lady, took a hack at the entrance of the pier, and was driven to the Fifth Avenue Hotel. The initials on the luggage strapped on the rear of the vehicle were M.B.

In conversing with the driver the gentleman--for his appearance and bearing fully indicated his right to the title--spoke English, though somewhat imperfectly; with the lady he talked in sonorous Castilian.

Apparently, no one bestowed any particular notice upon the pair. They were two foreigners out of the great throng of foreigners which lands daily in the metropolis; they were Spaniards and reasonably well-to-do, seeing that they came over in the saloon, and not in the steerage.

The names registered at the hotel were Manuel Blanco and wife.

Late during the following evening the lady personally came to the office seemingly in great distress. An interpreter being procured, it was learned that Señor Blanco, in response to a visiting-card sent to his room, had left the apartment shortly after breakfast that morning, and had not since returned.

The lady explained that he had no business affairs in New York, and that they were merely resting in the city for a few days to recover from the effects of the ocean voyage, before going to Charleston, S.C., their destination.

The clerk in the office simply knew that a stranger had called and sent a card to Señor Blanco, and that the two, after meeting, had left the hotel together.

The anxiety of Señora Blanco was evidently excessive. She rejected such commonplace reasons as that her husband might have lost his way, or that some unlooked-for business matters had claimed his attention.

"No, no!" she repeated, almost hysterically; "no beezness. Ah, Dios! El está muerte."

A physician was sent for, and the lady, who was fast reaching a stage of nervous prostration, placed in his care. The hotel detective proceeded at once to Police Headquarters, whence telegrams were despatched to the various precincts, giving a description of the missing man, and making inquiries concerning him. The replies were all in the negative: no such person had come under the notice of the police.

From what has thus far been narrated, it might be inferred that Blanco's absence was due to one of those strange disappearances which happen in great cities. The inference, however, would be wrong. Blanco had not disappeared.

True, his agonized wife and the police of New York City had no trace of his whereabouts; but Mr. Michael Chalmette, an officer detailed by the U.S. Marshal in New Orleans to arrest Leon Sangrado, at the request of the Republic of Chili, on the charge of repeatedly committing murder and highway robbery in that country, was entirely sure that the missing person was sitting beside him, handcuffed to his left wrist, and that both were speeding toward New Orleans as fast as a railway-car could take them.

When the French steamer "Canada" arrived, Mr. Michael Chalmette, wearing the uniform and badge of a Custom House officer, stationed himself by the gang-plank and narrowly scrutinized each passenger that came ashore. While Blanco's trunks were being examined, he stood near that

gentleman, and furtively compared his features with those on a photograph. It was Chalmette who sent the card to Blanco's room, in the hotel, next day, and who induced Blanco to accompany him in a carriage, as he said, to the Custom House, to arrange some irregularity in the passing of Blanco's luggage. The driver of that carriage, however, was told to go to the Pennsylvania Railroad Dépôt, in Jersey City.

Blanco evinced some surprise on being taken across the ferry, but was easily satisfied by his companion's explanation that the branch of the Custom House to be visited was on the Jersey side.

When the station was reached Chalmette led the way to the waiting-room, and quietly observed, before the unsuspecting Blanco could finish a sentence beginning:

"Ees it posseeble zat zees is ze Custom--"

"You are my prisoner. You had better come without making trouble."

Blanco looked at him aghast--not half comprehending the words.

"A prisoner--I--for what?"

Chalmette returned no answer, but produced his warrant.

"But I no understand--I--"

Just then the warning bell rung. Chalmette seized his prisoner by the arm and pushed him through the gateway.

On the platform Blanco made some slight resistance. The policeman, whose attention was attracted thereby, after a few words with Chalmette, assisted the latter in forcing him upon the train, which was already slowly moving out of the dépôt.

* * * * *

It is necessary to break the thread of the story here to note an odd coincidence. While there is a French steamer "Canada" belonging to the Compagnie Générale Trans Atlantique, and plying between New York and Havre, there is also an English steamer "Canada" belonging to the National Line, which travels between New York and London. It so happened that on the same afternoon that the French vessel came in, as before narrated, the English steamer of like name also arrived.

Among the passengers who landed from the English "Canada" there was also a couple, man and woman, apparently Spaniards, and there was an undeniable resemblance between the man and Blanco. The former, however, had features cast in a much rougher mould, and his general bearing

indicated that he was not a gentleman, as plainly as Blanco's did the reverse.

The luggage of the pair consisted of a single valise, which was carried by the woman, the man striding on ahead, leisurely puffing a cigarette. They hired no carriage, but walked from the pier, across and up West Street, and took a street-car going to the east side of the city.

As soon as they left the conveyance the man spread out his arms and expanded his chest with a long breath. The woman half smiled, and said something to him in Spanish. Then they mingled with the crowd around Tompkins Square and disappeared.

* * * * *

Two days after Blanco's arrest the physician, now in constant attendance upon his wife, filed the death certificate of a stillborn child. Puerperal fever set in, and the life of the unhappy woman for more than two weeks trembled in the balance. During the first week a telegram from New Orleans, which Blanco's captor had permitted him to send, came, addressed to her.

The physician opened it; but as she was almost constantly unconscious, it was impossible to inform her of its contents for some days. Then she was simply told that her husband had been heard from, and was safe. The doctor peremptorily forbade any information being given her of Blanco's true situation; and as she could not understand the language, and so glean intelligence from the newspapers, which contained reports of the inquiry conducted by the Commissioner, and the complete identification of the prisoner as Leon Sangrado, she, of course, remained in ignorance of what had happened.

Some five weeks elapsed before she was judged sufficiently strong to bear the shock which such news would inevitably produce. Then she was told as gently as possible, all mention of the nature of the charges against Blanco being avoided.

She listened in silent surprise.

"But he has never been in Chili in his life," she insisted.

The old doctor, himself a Spaniard, looked at her pityingly, but said nothing.

"He has been Consul before nowhere but at Trieste; how could he have been in South America?" she continued.

"Consul? Is your husband, then, in the Consular service of Spain?" queried the doctor, somewhat surprised.

"He is here as Consul to Charleston--in--ah, what is the name?--Carolina."

"Can you prove that?" demanded the physician, somewhat excitedly.

"I can--that is, I think there are official papers in the trunks. Is it necessary?"

"Very necessary."

"Here are the keys, then."

The doctor in her presence opened the luggage, and in a curiously arranged secret compartment in one of the trunks found the documents. After a few moments spent in looking them over, he said:

"Do you feel strong to-day?"

"Not very."

"I think you could travel, however. I will see that your baggage is properly packed, if you will be prepared to accompany me to-morrow morning."

"But whither?"

"To Washington; to the Spanish Minister. This is a serious business."

Under the supervision of the doctor the journey was safely accomplished. After proper repose Señora Blanco and the physician proceeded to the Spanish Legation, and within a very short time Señor Antonio Mantilla, Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary of His Catholic Majesty, was in possession of Blanco's papers, and of the facts, so far as known to his visitors, attending that gentleman's arrest.

Señor Mantilla looked grave and said little. He thanked the physician, however, warmly for the part he had taken in the matter, and calling a secretary placed Señora Blanco in his charge, with instructions that she should receive the greatest care and attention.

He then desired the attendance of his Secretary of Legation, and the two officials remained in earnest consultation for more than two hours. During this period several telegrams were sent to the Spanish Consul at New Orleans, and a long cipher-message to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Madrid.

A few days later a lengthy report was received from the Consul at New Orleans, accompanied by three letters from Blanco to his wife, not one

of which had been forwarded from the jail in which he was confined.

Another consultation was held at the Spanish Legation, during which this report and an answering message from Madrid were frequently referred to.

The report set forth the facts of the identification of Blanco as Sangrado by the Chilian representatives, with sufficient certainty to convince the U.S. Commissioner. Until a late period in the inquiry Blanco had had no counsel. He had, however, asseverated from the beginning that he was the Consul of Spain at Charleston--a fact not believed, because there was already a Consul resident at that place. Communication with that official simply showed that he expected to be transferred to another post, but had not been informed of the name of his successor. The Commissioner, seeing that Blanco was doing nothing to obtain testimony in his own favor, quietly arranged that counsel should be provided for him; and the lawyers, as a matter of course, at once sent to New York for Blanco's papers.

Señora Blanco, being then in a dangerous condition, was helpless. Search was made through the trunks, without finding any trace of the documents hidden in the secret compartment.

The Legation of Spain in Washington had information that Manuel Blanco had been sent to assume the Consulship at Charleston, but no one could personally identify the prisoner to be the Manuel Blanco appointed.

The Chilian witnesses had sworn that the prisoner was Leon Sangrado in the most unequivocal manner--and Chalmette deposed that he saw him land from the "Canada," in which vessel he had been instructed to look for the fugitive.

The facts, as thus gathered by the Spanish diplomatists from the Consul at New Orleans, from Señora Blanco, and from her physician, were complete. The outcome of their deliberations upon them was twofold.

First.--The departure of Señora Blanco, under care of an attaché of the Spanish Legation, to join her husband at New Orleans.

Second.--The following diplomatic communication from the Minister of Spain to the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Legation of Spain at Washington,

January 16th, 1882.

The undersigned, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of His Catholic Majesty, has the honor to address the Honorable Secretary of State, with a view to obtaining from the Federal

Government reparation for the arrest of Señor Don Manuel Blanco, His Catholic Majesty's Consul at Charleston, S.C., at the demand of the Republic of Chili, on a charge of crime preferred by the Government of that country. The undersigned is instructed to protest, in the most distinct terms, against this grave breach of international obligations, to insist upon the immediate release of the said Blanco, and to require from the Federal Government an apology suited to the circumstances. The undersigned avails himself, etc.,

ANTONIO MANTILLA.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

WASHINGTON, January 20th, 1882.

SIR: Referring to your communication of the 16th inst., in which you protest against the arrest of the person alleged to be Señor Don Manuel Blanco, His Catholic Majesty's Consul at Charleston, at the instance of the Republic of Chili, and demand the release of the said person, with a suitable apology from this Government in the premises, I have the honor to inform you that the representatives of the Chilian Government allege the person in question to be one Leon Sangrado, a fugitive from justice, charged with the crimes of murder and robbery; that, before the United States Commissioner at New Orleans, the Chilian representatives have produced evidence identifying the prisoner as Leon Sangrado, which evidence has warranted the said Commissioner in rendering judgment accordingly; and that the proceedings and judgment, on review by the President of the United States, have been confirmed, and the warrant of extradition ordered. I have the honor to transmit herewith a copy of the record of the evidence in the case for your Excellency's information. I have also to state that, in the circumstances, this Government conceives itself to be acting in a spirit of strict international comity with the Republic of Chili, and, upon the representations made by your Excellency, cannot admit that any reparation or apology is due to the Government of His Catholic Majesty.

I have the honor, etc.,

JAS. G. BLAINE,

Secretary of State.

Some days later the Spanish Minister forwarded a note to the State Department, wherein, after the usual formal recitals, he stated as follows:

The undersigned has the honor to inform the Honorable Secretary of State that, having transmitted his communication by cable to the Government of His Catholic Majesty, he is now instructed to make the following demands:

1st. That the Federal Government shall deliver Señor Don Manuel Blanco, His Catholic Majesty's Consul at Charleston, S.C., alleged to be Leon Sangrado, a fugitive from justice from the Republic of Chili, to the undersigned, at the Legation of Spain at Washington, by or before the first day of February, proximo.

2. That the Federal Government shall address to the Government of His Catholic Majesty a formal and solemn apology for the insult offered by the arrest of said Blanco. And, in further proof thereof, shall, on said first day of February, at noon, cause the Spanish flag to be hoisted over Fort Columbus, in New York Harbor; Fort Warren, in Boston Harbor; the Navy Yard, in Washington; and at the mast-head of the flag-ship of the North Atlantic squadron--then and there to be saluted with twenty-one guns.

I have the honor, etc.,

ANTONIO MANTILLA.

The reply sent by Secretary Blaine to this peremptory demand was, as might be expected, an equally peremptory refusal.

Thereupon the Spanish Minister demanded his passports, and with his Legation left the country.

The passports of the American Minister at Madrid were at the same time forwarded to him, and he returned to the United States.

Blanco was delivered to the Chilean representatives, and duly extradited, his wife accompanying him.

The anti-administration newspapers commented with great severity upon the case, alleging that undue haste was manifested in forwarding the proceedings; that proper opportunity was not afforded the accused to establish his true identity; that the warrant of extradition was illegal, inasmuch as it had been issued by an Assistant Secretary of State during the absence of both the President and Secretary from Washington, and that, consequently, there had been in fact no real review of the proceedings by the Executive.

The administration journals, on the contrary, found the extradition of the prisoner to be perfectly within the letter of the law; but were not inclined to say much on this point, preferring rather to applaud Mr.

Blaine's new proof of a "vigorous foreign policy," as exemplified in the previously quoted correspondence with the Spanish Minister.

* * * * *

I.

THE GATHERING OF THE STORM.

That the friendly relations of two great nations should be ruptured by a difficulty which, to all appearances, might easily have been adjusted, seems incredible; but it should be remembered that at this period Spain and the United States were by no means on the best of terms. Spanish war-vessels in the West Indies had been overhauling American merchantmen in a high-handed way, which had already called forth the remonstrances of our Government; and the complaints from Cuba of the insecurity of property and life of American citizens had become more numerous than ever. Still, the result of the dispute was a surprise to the world; especially as the overt act of rupture had come from Spain, and not from the United States, as had so frequently hitherto seemed probable.

The popular excitement throughout the country was intense. There was a universal demand for war. It was pointed out that the country was never so prosperous, or better able to bear the burden of a conflict; that, with our immense resources, an army could be raised and a navy equipped inside of sixty days; that such a war would be of short duration, and that the result could be none other than the humiliation of Spain, and the ceding to us of the Spanish West Indies as a war indemnity.

The House of Representatives fairly rung with bellicose speeches, and the press, with a few exceptions, reflected the popular feeling.

On the other hand, however, there was a powerful party attempting to stem the precipitancy of the nation. The great moneyed corporations viewed the matter with alarm, and advocated peaceful settlement, or, at most, inaction. This, however, was attributed to their fears of unsettlement of values, and consequent depreciation of their property.

The Senate, refusing to be influenced by popular clamor, steadily opposed all hasty legislation originating in the lower House. The President and Cabinet brought down upon themselves the bitter denunciation of the opposition press for "cowardly truckling to Spain," because no immediate steps were taken to place army and navy on a war footing, and no volunteers were called for.

A month went by. The popular excitement in this period perceptibly decreased; and, as it did so, the New York World and Tribune, which, from the first, had given but weak support to the cry for war, became more outspoken against hostilities. The bill agreed to by both Houses of Congress, providing for the immediate construction of ten swift armored cruisers, was strongly attacked in both journals, and the arming of the harbor forts, and the elaborate preparations which began to be visible for protecting the harbor by torpedoes, were sneered at as "useless precautions, dictated by an unworthy fear of a nation which would never venture to attack us."

The stocks of the New York Central, Western Union Telegraph, Lake Shore, and other corporations controlled by Vanderbilt and Jay Gould, which had fallen during the excitement of the previous month, rose slowly, but steadily.

On the afternoon of March 6th, the Evening Telegram issued an extra, reporting the sailing from Coruna of four Spanish ironclads. The announcement on the London Stock Exchange was that they were going to Cuba.

On the following day there was a decided fall in American Securities in London, and a weak market in Wall Street; which degenerated into a rapidly declining one when it became rumored that Gould was selling Western Union short in large blocks, and that Vanderbilt's brokers were similarly disposing of N.Y. Central and other stocks.

At 10 o'clock that night the news came that Spain had formally declared war upon the United States. It was posted in all the hotels, and read from the stages of all the theatres. The people flocked into the streets en masse. Speeches were made, breathing defiance and demands for an immediate attack upon Spain, before tremendous crowds, in Madison and Union Squares. No one slept that night.

Next morning there was a panic in Wall Street, which was arrested, however, by the intelligence from London that, although Government four-per-cents had fallen to 86, they were steady at that figure, and that the Rothschilds and Baring Brothers were buying them in largely. Before night Congress had voted a special appropriation of a hundred million dollars for purposes of defense, authorized the immediate construction of twenty armored ships, and the President issued his proclamation, calling for the raising of four hundred thousand men "to repel an invasion of the Union."

Within twenty-four hours the regiments of the National Guard in New York and vicinity were mustered into the service of the United States and ordered into camp, under command of General Hancock. That officer at once began the construction of sea-coast batteries on Coney Island, Rockaway Beach, and the New Jersey coast. A crack city regiment was

detailed to complete the partially finished fort on Sandy Hook and throw up earthworks along the Peninsula; but, as the hands of most of the men became quite sore through wielding shovels and picks, they were relieved and sent to garrison Governor's Island, where they gave exhibition drills daily, and, on Friday evenings, invited their female friends to hops of the most enjoyable description. The Hook fort was subsequently completed by a volunteer regiment of Cuban cigar-makers, from the Bowery.

As a matter of course, notice was immediately given to all foreign vessels in port of the proposed blocking of the Narrows and the Main, Swash and East Channels with torpedoes, and forty-eight hours' time was accorded them wherein to take their departure. The European steamers were the first to leave, each one towing from two to five sailing-vessels. Later on, General Hancock impressed all the harbor tugs into service; and, by their aid, before the specified period had elapsed, not a single ship floating a foreign flag remained in New York Harbor. A battalion of army engineers, under command of General Abbot, and another of sailors, under Captain Selfridge, at once began operations.

In the Narrows, torpedoes were moored at distances of one hundred feet apart, and were connected with the shore by electric wires. At various points along the beach shell-proof huts were constructed, to which these wires led. In each hut was arranged a camera lucida, so that a picture of the harbor, over a limited area, was thrown upon a whitened table. In this way an observer could recognize the instant an enemy's vessel arrived over a sunken mine, and could explode the latter by simply touching a button which allowed the electric current to pass to the torpedo. In the Harbor channels the torpedoes were so arranged as to be exploded on contact of an enemy's vessel with a partially submerged buoy.

The torpedo-stations on Staten and Coney Islands and the Jersey coast were provided with movable fish-torpedoes of the Ericsson and Lay types, intended to be sent out against a hostile vessel, and manoeuvred from the shore. All the steam-tugs in the Harbor were moored in Gowanus bay, and each tug was rigged with a long boom projecting from her bow, on which a torpedo, containing some fifty pounds of dynamite, was carried.

With the tugs, and serving as flag-ship for the squadron, was the U.S. torpedo-boat "Alarm," Lieutenant-Commander H.H. Gorringe.

The armament of the sea-coast batteries was not calculated to strike terror into the soul of any nation owning a modern ironclad vessel. It consisted mainly of old-fashioned smooth-bore guns, a system of artillery which has been rejected by every European power as the weakest and most inefficient. The greatest range attainable with the best of these cannon was 8000 yards, or some four and one half miles. At one

quarter this range their shot would be utterly unable to penetrate even moderately thin armor. Besides these guns there were a few ten and twelve-inch rifles of cast-iron, and hence of unreliable and inferior material; some old smooth-bore cannon, converted into rifles by wrought-iron linings; and a number of mortars and pieces of small calibre, altogether contemptible in the light of the advances made in the art of war during the last quarter of a century.

Meanwhile the inventors were not idle, and the press fairly teemed with novel suggestions for the defense of the city. It was proposed to run all the oil stored in the Williamsburgh refineries into the lower bay, and set it on fire when the enemy's fleet appeared.

The Herald suggested the raising of a regiment of divers to live in a submarine fort, the guns of which should be arranged to fire upwards into a vessel floating above, and immediately offered to contribute \$250,000 to begin the construction of such defenses.

General Newton proposed the building of continuous earthworks on both shores of the bay and Narrows, behind which a broad-gauge railroad should be constructed. On the track he placed heavy platform-cars, each car carrying one heavy gun. Embrasures were made at regular intervals along the embankment. His idea was, that if a hostile vessel made her way into the Harbor, the gun-cars should move along behind the earthworks, keeping abreast of the ship, and thus pour into her a continuous fire. Measures were promptly taken to follow this plan.

Mr. T.A. Edison announced that he had invented everything which, up to that time, any one else had suggested. He invited all the reporters to Menlo Park, and, after elaborately explaining the merits of a new catarrh remedy, showed some lines on a piece of paper, which, he said, represented huge electro-magnets, which he proposed to set up along the coast, say, near Barnegat. When the enemy's iron ships appeared, he proposed to excite these magnets, and draw the vessels on the rocks. Somebody said that this notion had been anticipated by one Sindbad the Sailor, whereupon Mr. Edison denounced that person as a "patent pirate." He also said that these magnets would be exhibited in working order next Christmas Eve.

Professor Bell proposed the "induction balance," as a way of recognizing the approach of the enemy's iron vessels. He went down the Bay with his instrument, and sent back some telegrams which were alarming, until it was discovered that the professor had made a slight error in the direction from which he asserted the ships were coming, it being manifestly impossible for them to sail overland from the Pacific, as his contrivance predicted.

The condition of affairs in the city reminded one of the early days of the Rebellion. Wall Street was panicky--chiefly because of the immense

depreciation in railway securities. Government four-per-cent bonds, however, had gone up to ninety-eight. Provisions were high, and, through the stoppage of European commerce, the cost of imported articles, such as dress-goods, tea, etc., became excessive. Recruiting was going on everywhere; the regiments, as fast as organized, being dispatched to different points along the sea-board, or to swell the numbers of an army under command of General Sheridan, which was preparing to sail to Key West, to invade Cuba.

During the month of March New York remained in a state of suspense. Army contractors did a brisk business; but otherwise there was little doing. News was eagerly sought. It was known that Spain was mobilizing her army and fitting out transports; but beyond this, and the dispatching of the four ironclads, which had duly reached Havana, she had taken no steps pointing toward an invasion of the United States. All the European nations had issued proclamations of neutrality, except Russia and France. England had ordered the great Spanish ironclad, "El Cid," in which Sir William Armstrong had just placed two 100-ton guns, out of her waters inside of twenty-four hours after Spain had declared war; and this, although the vessel was in many respects unfinished. The Queen's proclamation was most stringent against the fitting out or coaling of the vessels of either belligerent, and a special Act of Parliament was passed, inflicting penalties of the greatest severity for any violation of it. John Bull evidently proposed to pay for no more "Alabamas."

The first great news of the war came during the first week in June. The Spanish screw corvette "Tornado," six guns, had sailed from Cartagena for Havana. Off Cape Trafalgar she encountered the "Lancaster," flag-ship of the United States European squadron, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Nicholson. The "Lancaster" carried two-eleven-inch and twenty nine-inch old-fashioned smooth-bore Dahlgren guns. The action was short, sharp, and decisive.

It terminated in the surrender of the "Tornado," after the loss of her captain, five officers, and forty of her crew. The "Lancaster" was badly cut up about the rigging, but otherwise uninjured. Her loss was but five men. The first tidings of this was the arrival of the "Tornado" in Hampton Roads, with a prize crew on board, and the royal ensign of Spain floating beneath the stars and stripes.

When the extras announcing the news were shouted in the streets, the enthusiasm of the people knew no bounds. From every building, from every window, the flag was displayed. Throngs of excited men marched through the avenues, cheering and shouting, and the recruiting was renewed so vigorously, that New York's quota of the four hundred thousand men called for by the President was filled within the next twenty-four hours after the news came.

In the midst of this furore, the bulletins announced that the Spanish

ironclads "Zaragoza" and "Numancia" had sailed from Havana, with no destination announced; that their consorts, the "Arapiles" and "Vittoria," together with three transports, "San Quentin," "Patino," and "Ferrol," the latter well laden with coal and provisions, were preparing to follow; also, that the huge "El Cid" had been fitted for sea, and was about to sail from Vigo, Spain.

Just before this intelligence arrived, the United States steam frigate "Franklin," forty-three guns, carrying the flag of Vice-Admiral Stephen C. Rowan, left Hampton Roads on a cruise, northwardly.

Where were the Spanish ironclads going?

On Sunday morning, April 9th, Trinity Church was crowded with worshippers. The venerable Bishop of New York was present, and was to deliver the sermon. His erect, stately form, clad in the flowing robes of his office, had just appeared in the pulpit, and he had spoken the words of his text, when a commotion in the rear of the church caused him to stop and look up, wondering at the unseemly interruption.

A soldier emerged from the crowd, and, making his way to the Astor pew, handed a letter to Mr. John Jacob Astor. The ruddy face of that gentleman blanched as he read its contents. Then he rose, walked to the pulpit, and handed the missive to the bishop.

A dead silence prevailed--at last broken by these simple words:

"Brethren, the war-vessels of the public enemy have appeared off our Harbor. Let us pray."

A deep, heart-felt Amen responded to the appeal made in eloquent, though faltering, tones; and then, quiet and orderly, the congregation left the temple. It was fitting that such a prayer should be the last ever offered in a sanctuary of which, but a few days later, only a heap of smoking ruins remained.

The same news had been forwarded to the other churches, and the congregations, dismissed, had gathered in front of the great bulletin-boards which had been erected in the various parts of the city. In huge letters were the words:

"A large steamer, showing Spanish flag, sighted off Barnegat."

Shortly afterwards came another dispatch:

"The United States frigate 'Franklin' has been signaled off Fire Island."

Then another dispatch:

"The Spanish steamer has gone to the eastward."

And then, three hours later:

"Heavy firing has been heard from the south and east."

II.

THE BATTLE OF FIRE ISLAND.

The "Franklin," on leaving Fire Island, where she had communication with the shore, stood to the westward. At 3 p.m. the mast-head look-out reported a large steamer on the port bow. As is customary on vessels at sea, the "Franklin" showed no colors; the stranger displayed a flag which could not be made out.

On the poop-deck of the "Franklin" were Admiral Rowan, Captain Greer, commanding the ship, and the executive officer, Lieutenant-Commander Jewell.

"Mast-head, there! can you make out her colors yet?" hailed the latter.

"No, sir."

"Take your glass and go aloft, Mr. Rodgers," said Admiral Rowan to his aid; "perhaps you can see better."

The officer rapidly ascended the rigging to the foretopmast cross-trees.

"It is the English flag, sir!" he shouted.

"Hoist English colors, Captain," said the admiral, quietly; "and bend on our own, ready to go up."

The red cross of St. George, the British man-of-war flag, rose slowly to the peak.

The stranger was seen to alter her course, and head for the "Franklin."

The admiral turned to Captain Greer and nodded. The latter gave an order to a midshipman standing near.

Rat-tat--rat-tat--rat-tat-tat!

The quick drum-beat to quarters for action rang sharply through the ship. The executive officer took his speaking-trumpet and stationed himself on the quarter-deck. The men sprang to their guns.

"Silence! man the port-guns. Cast loose and provide!"

A momentary confusion, as the thirty-eight nine-inch smooth-bore guns on the main-deck, the four hundred-pound rifles on the spar-deck, and the eleven-inch pivot on the fore-castle were cleared of their tackle, and got ready for training. The guns' crews then stood erect and silent in their places beside the guns, on the side of the ship turned toward the enemy.

Meanwhile the magazine had been opened, and the powder-boys flocked to the scuttles, receiving cartridges in the leather boxes slung to their shoulders. Shell were hoisted from below. The surgeon and his assistants, including the chaplain, laid out instruments, and converted the cock-pit into an operating-room. The fires in the galley were put out, and those under the boilers urged to their fiercest heat. The decks were sanded, in grim anticipation of their becoming slippery with blood. Tackles and slings were prepared to lower the wounded below. The Gatling guns aloft were made ready to fire upon the enemy's decks, in case the two vessels came near enough together.

"Prime!" shouted the officer on the quarter-deck. Primers were placed in the vents of the already loaded guns, and the gun-captains stepped back, tautening the lock-strings, and bending down to glance along the sights.

"Point! Tell the division officers to train on the craft that's coming, and wait orders." This last command to a midshipman aid.

The silence throughout the great ship was profound. The gun-captains eyed the approaching vessels over the sights of their guns. Only the quick throb of the engines and the sough of the waves were audible.

The two vessels were now within some four miles of each other. There was no question but that the stranger was a man-of-war--and an ironclad, at that--provided with a formidable ram.

"I thought so," suddenly ejaculated the admiral: "Now show him who we are."

The English flag had been replaced by the red-yellow-and-red bars of Spain. Down came the red cross from the peak of the "Franklin;" and then, not only there, but from every mast-head, floated the stars and stripes.

A puff of smoke from the Spaniard--a whirr, a shriek, and a solid shot struck the water, having passed entirely over the American frigate.

"He fires at long range!" remarked the admiral, calmly.

"It would be useless for us to reply," answered the captain.

"Clearly so."

"Shall we stop and wait for him, sir?"

"Wait for him? No! Go for him! Four bells, sir! Ring four bells and go ahead fast!"

The clang of the engine-bell resounded through the ship; the thump of the machinery grew more rapid; the whole vessel thrilled and shook, as if eager for the attack.

The distance between the two ships was reduced to about two miles.

Again the Spaniard fired. The shot struck the "Franklin" broad on her port-bow, knocked over a gun, killed six men, and passed through the other side of the ship.

Still the "Franklin" pressed on.

Crash! a huge shell from an Armstrong eighteen-ton gun burst between the fore and mainmasts; the bow pivot-gun was dismounted; ten men of her crew down; the maintopmast stays cut, and the maintopmast tottering. Crash! Another shell, and the jib-boom hangs dragging under the bows; the fore topgallantmast is carried away. Men hacked at the rigging to clear away the wreck which now impeded the ship's advance.

"Now let him have it," said the admiral, quietly.

The captain speaks to the executive officer, who shouts through his trumpet: "Port guns! Ready! Fire!!"

The concussion of the explosion made the ship stagger for a moment.

When the smoke cleared away, the Spaniard's mizzenmast was seen dragging overboard; but otherwise no damage had been inflicted.

"His armor is too thick for us," gravely remarked the admiral; "get boom torpedoes over the bows!"

"All ready, now, sir," reported the captain.

"Continue firing, and keep right for him."

"Shall we ram him, sir?"

"Yes, sir; as straight amidships as you can."

The "Franklin" now poured in her fire with all possible rapidity; but it was evident that her shot made little or no impression on the massive iron shield of her antagonist, although it played havoc amid his rigging. Another fact now became apparent--that the Spaniard was much the faster vessel of the two; for he was evidently nearing the "Franklin" more quickly than the "Franklin" was approaching him.

"Do you know who that ship is?" asked the admiral.

"The 'Numancia,' sir," replied the captain; "her armament is immensely better than ours. She has twenty-five Armstrong guns."

Crash! crash! Two more shells struck the wooden hull of the "Franklin" between the fore and mainmasts, tearing a great rent in her side and literally annihilating the crews of four guns.

"There is three feet of water in the hold, sir and it is gaining!" shouted the carpenter at the pump-well.

Men were sent at once to the pumps.

Crash! This time a double explosion, followed by dense clouds of steam. Men, scalded and horribly burned, climbed up the ladders from below.

"Our boilers are gone," reported the captain.

"Keep her broadside toward the enemy, sir," returned the admiral.

The guns of the "Franklin" were now firing slowly. Their smoke overhung the vessel so that the Spaniard could not be seen, but the reports of his cannon sounded closer and closer.

Suddenly the huge prow of the "Numancia" loomed up close aboard the "Franklin."

"Starboard! Hard a starboard!" shouted the admiral.

It was too late. There was no one at the helm. A shell, bursting close to the wheel, had killed the helmsman, and a fragment had buried itself in the captain's breast.

The admiral himself turned to go toward the wheel, but suddenly staggered and pitched forward, dead.

Then came the frightful explosion of the "Numancia's" bow-torpedo, striking the ill-fated frigate; and then the crushing and splintering of

timbers under the fearful stroke of the ram.

Five minutes afterwards the Spanish war-ship was alone. Slowly the "Franklin" sank--her lofty mast-heads going under with the stars and stripes still proudly floating from them. The "Numancia" lowered her boats to pick up survivors. They returned with one officer and two seamen--all that remained of the crew of nearly one thousand souls.

The American flag ship had been sunk by a fourth-rate European ironclad--the first practical proof of the miserably short-sighted policy of a nation of fifty millions of inhabitants, with an enormous coast line and innumerable ports to be protected, relying for its safety upon a navy the fifty-five available vessels of which are too slow to run away, and too lightly armed and too weakly built to defend themselves.

The "Numancia" hoisted her boats and stood to the westward. Shortly afterward she exchanged signals with the "Zaragoza," "Arapiles" and "Vittoria." The war-vessels drew together, the transports came alongside of them, and fresh supplies of coal and provisions were delivered. Then the transports headed to the south, and the men-of-war laid their course for New York.

III.

THE METROPOLIS BELEAGUERED.

Three ships of the Spanish squadron named were armed with Armstrong guns. Their combined batteries aggregated eight cannon of eighteen tons four of twelve tons, eleven of nine tons, and twenty-eight of seven tons. The "Zaragoza" carried twenty guns of another pattern, ranging in calibre from eleven to seven and three-fourths inches. The total number of cannon which would thus be brought to bear upon New York and its suburbs was seventy-one.

The shot of the Armstrong guns above named vary in weight from four hundred to one hundred and fifteen pounds. If the entire number of guns should each deliver one shot, the total amount of iron projected would exceed six tons in weight.

The arrival of the Spanish vessels was not known until dawn of the morning of April 11th. Then they were descried on the horizon by the watchers at Sandy Hook. At first sight it was supposed that they had encountered heavy weather and lost their light spars; but, as they approached nearer, it was seen that each ship had sent down all her

upper rigging, and had housed topmasts.

There was no mistaking what this meant. It was the stripping for battle.

It was also noticed that the ships steamed very slowly in single file; that from the bows of each projected a fork-like contrivance, and that in advance of the leader were several steam-launches, between which, and crossing the path of the large vessel, extended hawsers which dipped into the water. Evidently the new-comers had a wholesome dread of torpedoes, and hence the use of bow torpedo-catchers and the dragging-ropes.

No flag of any sort was exhibited.

Meanwhile the guns of all the sea-coast batteries along the shores had been manned, ready to fire upon the huge black monsters as soon as they should come within range. The order had been given to commence firing on the hoisting of a flag and on the discharge of a heavy gun from the signal station on Sandy Hook, where General Hancock had posted himself with his staff.

In the city the time for excitement had passed. The business section was deserted, most of the men being either in the fortifications or under arms in the camps, ready to move as directed to repel any attempt on the part of the enemy to effect a landing.

There had been no general exodus from New York, as it was not believed possible that the enemy's missiles could reach the city proper. In Brooklyn, however, but few people remained. All the churches in the city were open, and with singular unanimity the people flocked into them. No public conveyances were running; few vehicles moved through the streets. The silence was like that of a summer holiday, when the people are in the suburbs, pleasure-seeking.

"They seem to have stopped, general," said an aid who was attentively watching the advance of the Spanish vessels through his glass.

"They are a long way out of our range," remarked General Hancock. "We have nothing that carries far enough to injure them. They are fully five miles out."

"Now they go ahead again. No, they are turning," said the aid.

The leading ship had ported her helm, and, followed by the others, filed to the eastward, bringing the port broadsides to bear upon the Long Island batteries.

"They certainly are not going into action there," said the general.

A cloud of white smoke arose from the bow of the leading vessel, and then across the water came the deep "boom" of a heavy gun.

"Why, that fellow has fired out to sea," exclaimed one of the general's staff.

"No, it was a blank cartridge. He fired to attract attention. See! there goes a white flag up to his mast-head!" said the officer at the telescope: "A boat with a flag-of-truce is putting off, general."

"Send a launch out to meet it," said Hancock, shortly: "and see that it does not come nearer than a mile or so from the shore."

A few minutes after, the steam-yacht "Ideal," which had been offered by its owner as a dispatch boat to the general, was swiftly running towards the Spanish messenger.

The aid at the telescope saw an officer step from the Spanish boat into the yacht, and then the latter put back to the Hook, the enemy's launch remaining where she was.

The Spanish officer was conducted to the presence of the general. In excellent English, he announced himself as the Fleet Captain and Chief-of-Staff of the admiral commanding the Spanish squadron present, and with much ceremony presented the communication with which he was charged.

The general received the missive courteously and opened it. The expression of astonishment which came over his face as he read it for a moment gave place to one of anger. His eyes flashed, his face reddened, and his fingers nervously played with the end of his moustache. Then, as he read it over the second time, a rather contemptuous smile seemed to lurk about the corners of his mouth.

The staff stood by in silent but eager anticipation. The general held the letter in his hands behind his back and walked up and down the small apartment, as if in deep thought, raising his eyes occasionally to glance at the Spanish vessels, which lay almost motionless, blowing off steam.

Finally, he turned to the Spanish officer, who stood erect, with his hand resting upon the hilt of his sword, and said, in a quiet, though determined, voice:

"You will make my compliments to the admiral commanding, and deliver, in reply to his communication, that which I will now dictate."

An aid at once seated himself at the table, and, at the general's dictation, wrote as follows:

SENOR DON ALMIRANTE VIZCARRO, _Commanding Squadron off New York_.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your communication of this date, sent per flag-of-truce, in which you demand--

1st.--That immediate surrender to the force under your command be made of the fortifications of this harbor, together with the Navy Yard at Brooklyn, and all munitions of war here existing.

2nd.--That the cities of New York, Brooklyn and Jersey City do cease to be paid, on board of your flag-ship, within three days after the said surrender, the sum of fifty millions of dollars in gold, or in the paper currency of England or France.

And in which you announce that non-acquiescence in the foregoing will be followed by the bombardment of the said fortifications, the Navy Yard and the arsenals in New York City, by your squadron, after the lapse of twenty-four hours from noon this day.

In reply, I have to state that these demands are peremptorily refused and I have most solemnly to protest against so gross a violation of the laws of civilized warfare, as is indicated in your intention to attack a city within a period too short to enable the non-combatants to be safely removed.

I have the honor to be, etc.,

WINFIELD S. HANCOCK,

Major-General Commanding.

This reply was telegraphed to New York, and Mr. Pierrepont Edwards, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul-General, was one of the first to receive it. He acted with the usual force and promptness with which British interests and the lives of British subjects are protected by British officials abroad. That is to say, he first telegraphed to the British Minister at Washington, Mr. West, requesting, that the three great ironclads, "Devastation," "Orion" and "Agamemnon," all of which were then in Hampton Roads, be at once sent to New York. Then he prepared a formal protest against the proposed action of the Spanish Admiral, which all the other foreign consuls at once signed, and which was delivered aboard the Spanish flag-ship by a boat bearing the British flag before three o'clock that afternoon.

The Spanish admiral took the protest into consideration to the extent of granting forty-eight hours' time. The consuls protested again at this as not being sufficient, and demanded five clear days. The admiral refused to grant more than three; but when, before the three days had expired,

the trio of English war-ships made their appearance, and calmly moved between his fleet and the shore, he changed his mind and granted the desired time--which was wise, seeing that the English vessels could blow his squadron out of water with little trouble and not much injury to themselves.

The railroads which go out of New York, while perhaps adequate for all purposes of traffic in time of peace, are scarcely equal to the removal from the city of several hundred thousand women, children, sick and aged persons within a period of even five days. People of this description cannot be moved as easily as armies; and hence, when the morning of the fifth day dawned, fully one-half of the non-combatant population was still in the city.

This, however, was attributable not only to the inadequacy of the means of transportation, but to the singular apathy--it was not fearlessness--of the people themselves. In the great tenement districts, it became necessary to send soldiers into the houses to drive people out of them.

Among the Irish and Germans there was actual rioting, when force was thus used. The impression was general that the missiles of the enemy could not reach the populated parts of New York.

The crowds, however, at the Grand Central Dépôt, trying to leave the city, were enormous. People were placed in cattle-cars, on wood cars--in fact, every sort of conveyance adapted to the tracks was pressed into service.

The Thirtieth Street Dépôt, on the west side, also was crowded, and trains were leaving thence every few minutes.

Just before noon, the city was horror-stricken by the news of a frightful accident at Spuyten Duyvil. An overloaded train from the Thirtieth Street Dépôt there, through a broken switch, came into collision with another overloaded train from the Grand Central Dépôt. The slaughter was horrible. Twelve cars were derailed, and more than a hundred and twenty people, mostly women and children, killed.

While people were repeating this news to one another with white faces and trembling lips, the Spanish squadron was taking position and preparing to attack.

The English squadron moved outside the Spanish ships, and stood off and on under easy steam.

At precisely noon the white flag was lowered from the mast-head of the Spanish flag-ship and the Spanish flags were hoisted by all of the vessels. Immediately afterwards the "Numancia" delivered her broadside

full upon the Coney Island battery.

Instantly the flag from the general's station was flung out, the signal-gun was discharged, and from all the sea-coast batteries the firing began.

IV.

IRON HAIL.

The position chosen by the attacking vessels was about one and a half miles to the south of Plumb Inlet. This point is distant from Fort Hamilton six miles, from Sandy Hook light seven miles, from Brooklyn Navy Yard nine and a half miles, and from the City Hall, New York City, about eleven miles, in a straight line. An ample depth of water to float ships drawing twenty-four feet here exists. The situation was sufficiently distant from the shore batteries to render the effect of their projectiles on the armor of the vessels quite inconsiderable.

The ships, however, did not remain motionless, but steamed slowly around in a circle of some two miles in diameter, each vessel delivering her fire as she reached the point above specified. In this way, the chances of being struck by projectiles from shore were not only lessened, but the injury which they could do was decreased by the greater distance which they would be compelled to traverse to strike the ships during the progress of the latter around the further side of the circle.

It was evident that the Spanish commander had no idea of attempting to land his forces, but simply proposed to keep up a slow, persistent bombardment. It was further apparent that only his lighter artillery was directed upon the shore batteries, and that he was practising with his heavy metal at high elevations, to find out how much range he could get.

When the second day of the bombardment opened, there were about a hundred thousand people still in New York, including two of the city regiments doing police duty. A strong force for this purpose was necessary, as a large number of roughs and criminals, who had hurried away during the first panic, now returned, and signalized their advent by the attempted pillage of the Vanderbilt residences.

About a hundred and fifty of this mob remained on the pavement of Fifth Avenue, after a well-directed mitrailleuse fire had been kept up for some fifteen minutes by the troops. The rest took to their heels, and lurked about the lower part of the city, waiting for a better

opportunity, and thinking hungrily of the contents of the magnificent dwellings in the up-town districts.

The sea-coast batteries nearest to the attacking ships were soon rendered untenable by their fire. The large hotels on Coney Island were all struck by shells and burned, and the villages of Flatlands, Gravesend, and New Utrecht were quickly destroyed.

Shell after shell then fell in Flatbush, and occasionally a terrific explosion in Prospect Park, in Greenwood Cemetery, and in the outlying avenues of Brooklyn, showed that the enemy was throwing his missiles over distances constantly augmenting.

On the morning of the third day a futile attempt was made to blow up the "Numancia," first by the Lay and then by the Ericsson submarine torpedo-boats. The Lay boat, however, ran up on the east bank and could not be got off, and the Ericsson started finely from the shore, but, apparently, sank before she had gone a mile.

The attack by the "Alarm" and her attendant fleet of torpedo-tugs had the effect of stopping the bombardment and of concentrating the enemy's attention upon his own safety. The tugs advanced gallantly to the onset, six of them rushing almost simultaneously upon the "Vittoria." That vessel met them with a broadside which sank four at once, and the other two were riddled by shell from Hotchkiss revolving cannon from the decks of the Spaniard; their machinery was crippled, and they drifted helplessly out to sea. Of the others, some ran aground on the bank, some were sunk, and not one succeeded in exploding her torpedo near a Spanish vessel. The "Alarm" planted a shell from her bow-rifle, at close range, squarely into the stern of the "Zaragoza," piercing the armor and killing a dozen men, besides disabling two guns. She was rammed, however, by the "Arapiles," and so badly injured as to compel her to make her escape into shoal water to prevent sinking. There she grounded, and the Spaniards leisurely made a target of her, although they considerately permitted her crew to go ashore in their boats without firing a shot at them.

Meanwhile the remaining citizens of New York had held a mass meeting, and appointed a committee of Public Safety, with General Grant at its head. There had been a great popular movement to have that gentleman put in supreme command of the army, but the authorities at Washington, for some occult reason, known only to themselves, had offered him a major-general's commission, which he promptly declined. Then he deliberately went to the nearest recruiting-station and tried to enlist as a private; but the recruiting-officer, after recovering his senses, with which he parted in dumb astonishment for some seconds, refused him on the ground that he was over forty-five years of age.

The general contented himself with remarking: "Guess they'll want me

yet," and thereupon lighting a huge cigar, calmly marched out of the office and went over to Flatbush, to "see where the shells are hitting;" serenely oblivious of the possibility of personal danger involved in that proceeding.

As chief of the Safety Committee, however, Grant became the real ruler of New York. Martial law existed, and the senior colonel of the regiments quartered in the city was in nominal charge; but, as this individual was not blessed with especial force of character, he never asserted his authority, and, in fact, seemed rather pleased to gravitate to the position of Grant's immediate subordinate.

On the evening of April 18th the watchers on Sandy Hook saw a fifth vessel join the Spanish fleet; a long, low craft, having, apparently, two turrets and very light spars. They also saw the admiral's flag on the "Numancia" lowered, only to be hoisted again on the foremast of the new-comer.

At daybreak on the following morning a shell crashed through the roof of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, descended to the cellar, burst there and wrecked a quarter of the building. What new fury had thus been let loose?

It has already been stated that the great ironclad "El Cid" had sailed from Vigo--she had arrived.

She carried four guns. Two one-hundred-ton Armstrongs, each having an effectual range of 12 miles, and two Krupp 15.7-inch guns, which throw shot weighing nearly 2000 pounds over ten miles. Krupp claims a range of 15 miles; but this is doubtful. She also was encased in 21-1/2 inches of compound steel and iron armor, capable of resisting the projectiles of any cannon known--except, perhaps, those of her own Armstrongs.

The most powerfully armed and most impregnable ironclad in the world now lay before New York.

It was an Armstrong shell which struck the Fifth Avenue Hotel. It was a Krupp shell which shortly after knocked down the steeple of Trinity Church as if it were a turret of cards.

In view of this new attack General Grant was requested to call a meeting of the Committee of Safety, to consider the question of capitulation, as it was evident that the continuation of such a bombardment would speedily destroy property in value far beyond the immense sum asked by the besiegers.

He notified the members to meet in the City Hall. When he arrived, he found nobody but a messenger-boy, who tremblingly emerged from the cellar.

The General quietly removed his cigar and asked:

"Where's the Committee?"

"They--they--is--up ter Inwood, sir."

The boy's teeth chattered so that he could hardly speak.

"What the deuce are they doing there?"

"Dunno, sir. They told me as to tell you, sir, that they wuz a Committee of Safety, and that's wot they wanted, sir."

"Wanted what?"

"S-s-afety, sir!"

"And they deputized you to tell me that, eh?"

"Ye-yes, sir."

"And you looked for me down in the cellar?"

"N-no, sir. I wanted safety, too, sir. Oh, Lordy!"

This last interjection was elicited by seeing the upper part of the _Tribune_ tall tower suddenly fly off, and land on the roof of the _Sun_ building.

A sort of a sphinx-like smile overspread the general's features.

He looked around for the messenger-boy, but that youth was making extraordinary speed up Broadway.

The general leisurely proceeded up that thoroughfare--occasionally stopping, as a shot went crashing into some near building, to note the effect.

On arriving at Union Square, he met a cavalry squad looking for him, and mounting the horse of one of the men, he proceeded with this escort to the upper end of the island, which was now densely packed with people.

The projectiles from the heavy guns of the great ironclad were now falling in the lower part of the city with terrible effect. The Western Union building was shattered from cellar to roof; the City Hall was on fire; so also was St. Paul's Church and the _Herald_ building. The last-mentioned conflagration was put out by the editors and compositors of that journal--the entire _Herald_ staff being then in the underground press-rooms, busily preparing and working off _extras_ giving the latest

details of the bombardment.

The Morse Building was completely demolished by two Krupp shells, and not an edifice in Wall Street, except the sub-Treasury, had escaped total ruin.

The result of the conference of the Safety Committee was the dispatching of a messenger to Sandy Hook, informing General Hancock of the condition of affairs, and asking him to request an armistice for parley.

The "Ideal," bearing a white flag, was at once dispatched to the Spanish flag-ship, and shortly after the firing ceased.

The Spanish admiral refused to alter the terms already proposed, except that, in view of the injury already inflicted on the city and the probable increased difficulty of collecting the sum demanded, he would agree to allow five days' time in which to pay the latter, on board his flag-ship.

General Hancock declined to consider this proposal.

"El Cid" now began a new manoeuvre. All the steam-launches of the fleet, provided with long, forked spars extending from their bows, formed in front of her, and, thus preceded, she deliberately steamed up to the Main channel.

The fort on the Hook at once opened upon her, but the shot glanced like dry peas from her armor. She, in return, shelled the fort, the masonry of which literally crumbled before the enormous projectiles hurled against it. Meanwhile, the launches had entered the channel and were picking up such torpedoes as could be detected. Other launches, having no crews on board, but being governed entirely by electric wires, were sent into the channel and caused to drop counter mines, which, on being fired, caused the explosion of such torpedoes as remained: thus making a broad and safe channel for the ironclad to enter.

Finally the remaining launches returned to the "Cid" and evidently reported the channel clear for she boldly steamed into it, stopping only for an instant, when off the end of the peninsula, to send a double charge of grape and canister from her huge guns into the ranks of the fugitives, who were precipitately rushing from the fort.

It was then that General Hancock was killed although the fact has since often been disputed. His body, wounded in a dozen places, was found on the sand near the highest wall of the fort, from the top of which, it is conjectured, he was swept by the fearful hail of the Spanish ironclad.

"El Cid" continued on into the bay, occasionally stopping as signaled by

the launches preceding her, when a torpedo was encountered, and finally took up her position within about a mile of Fort Hamilton, and hence about seven miles from the Battery.

As the projectiles from the fort glanced harmlessly from her armor, she paid no attention to that attack, but resumed her fire upon the city.

Shells now began to fall as far up-town as Forty-second Street.

V.

AT THE MERCY OF THE FOE.

Meanwhile, the other four vessels had ceased their bombardment of the batteries, as the latter no longer answered them.

They appeared to have new work in hand.

During the following afternoon a fresh sea-breeze set in. Then a large, swaying globe made its appearance on the deck of each of the vessels. Examination with the telescope showed to the signal men, who had established a new station on the Jersey highlands, that these mysterious spheres were balloons; and that the ships were about to dispatch them, was evident from the fact that small pilot-balloons were soon sent up. These last were wafted directly toward the city.

What possible object could the Spanish war-vessels have in this, was a question asked by every one, as soon as the intelligence became known.

The balloon which rose from the "Numancia" had a car attached, but there was clearly no one in it. Therefore the balloons were not to be used for purposes of observation.

The people in New York saw the balloons as they successively rose from the four vessels, and wonderingly watched their progress.

They saw the first of them gently sail toward the city until about over the Roman Catholic Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. Then a dark object seemed to fall from the car, the lightened balloon shot upward, the object struck the roof of the cathedral there was a fearful explosion, a trembling of the earth as if an angry volcano were beneath, and the crash of falling buildings followed.

Through the great clouds of dust and smoke it could be seen that not only was the cathedral shattered, but that the walls of every building

adjacent to the square on which it stood were down.

The Spaniards were dropping nitro-glycerine bombs into the city from the balloons. They knew how long it would take the breeze to waft the air-ships over the built-up portion, and it was an easy matter to adjust clock-work in the car to cause the dropping of the torpedo at about the proper time.

Accuracy was not needed. A shell, filled with fifty or a hundred pounds of dynamite or nitro-glycerine, would be sure to do terrible damage anywhere within a radius of three miles around Madison Square.

A second balloon dropped its charge into the receiving reservoir in Central Park, luckily doing no damage, but throwing up a tremendous jet of water. The third and fourth balloons let fall their dejectiles, the one among the tenements near Tompkins Square destroying an entire block of houses simultaneously; the other on High Bridge, completely shattering that structure, and so breaking the aqueduct through which the city obtains its water supply.

The Spanish admiral now ceased firing voluntarily and sent a message by flag-of-truce announcing his intention to continue the throwing of balloon torpedoes into the city until it capitulated, and, in order to avoid further destruction of property, he renewed the proposal already made.

General Grant, on receiving this message--for the citizens had literally forced him to take active command of the troops--simply remarked:

"Let him fire away!"

But the Safety Committee vehemently protested; and finally, after much discussion, induced Grant to send back word that the terms were accepted.

The situation was, in truth, one of sadness--of bitter humiliation. The Empire City had fallen, and lay at the mercy of a foreign foe. The immense ransom demanded must be raised and paid, or the work of destruction would be resumed until the defenders of the bay removed their torpedoes from the Narrows and permitted the Spanish forces to enter and occupy the metropolis.

THE FLAG WITH THE LONE STAR.

As it was manifestly impossible to obtain fifty millions of dollars in specie and foreign notes within New York--for all the money in the

vaults of the banks and the treasury had long since been sent to other cities--the general government assumed payment of the amount demanded by the Spaniards, which, however, it was decided not to make until just before the expiration of the last of the five days of grace.

As will now be seen, this was a fortunate decision. The unremitting bombardment which had been maintained by the four vessels off the Long Island shore had so greatly reduced their supply of ammunition that it became necessary to send for more: and for this purpose the "Vittoria" was dispatched to meet a transport which had been ordered to sail from Cuba at about this time.

On the evening of the third day the weather assumed a threatening appearance, and the "El Cid" left her position near Fort Hamilton for a more secure anchorage near Sandy Hook. The other ships stood out to sea.

It stormed heavily during that night, and before evening on the morrow one of the strongest gales ever known in this vicinity had set in.

The situation in which the Spanish flag-ship now found herself was critical. She had put down her two bower anchors, but they were clearly insufficient to hold her. To veer out cable was dangerous, for it was not known how near the ship was to sunken torpedoes; to allow her to drag was to run the double chance of striking a torpedo or going ashore.

During the night she parted both cables, and the morning found her firmly imbedded in the beach off the Hook. Of the other vessels, the "Numancia" only was in sight.

The signal men, however, could see black smoke on the horizon; and this they anxiously watched, expecting momentarily to make out the "Arapiles" and "Zaragoza." Shortly after daybreak, a thick fog settled down, completely cutting off the seaward view.

In the signal station were General Grant and several members of the Safety Commission. The ransom money was in readiness, and the intention was to pay it over during the morning.

At about eight o'clock, heavy firing was heard from the sea.

It was too far distant to be accounted for by a supposed renewal of the bombardment by the Spanish ships, even under the assumption that they had thus broken the truce.

The watchers at the signal station looked at each other in astonishment, and eagerly waited for the fog to lift.

An hour later, the mist began to clear away. The sight that met the eyes of the spectators was one never to be forgotten.

The "Numancia" was evidently ashore on the East bank. Her fore and mainmasts were gone, and clouds of dark smoke were lazily ascending from her forecastle. Suddenly, the whole ship seemed to burst into a sheet of flame, there was a deep explosion, the air was filled with flying fragments, and a blackened hull was all that was left of the proud man-of-war.

The "Arapiles," about two miles further out to sea, was making a gallant defense against three strange vessels. Two, lying at short range on her quarters, were pouring in a fearful fire; the third, which had evidently been engaged with the "Numancia," was rapidly bearing down upon her, apparently intending to ram.

Who could the strangers be?

The flags which floated from their mast-heads bore a strong resemblance to our own, yet they were not the stars and stripes; for the stripes were replaced by but two broad bands of red and white, and in the blue field there was but a single star.

"Chili, by Jove!" ejaculated some one in the signal station.

He was right.

The new-comers were the "Huascar," the "Almirante Cochrane" and the "Blanco Encelada," the three armored vessels of the South American Republic.

It was the "Huascar" which was now bearing down upon the "Arapiles."

Suddenly, the Chilean monitor was seen to slacken her speed and change her course.

She no longer meant to ram; the necessity had ceased. At the same time, the other Chilean vessels ceased firing.

The Spanish ensign on the "Arapiles" had been lowered. In a few minutes after it rose again, but this time surmounted by the Chilean flag.

Then the four vessels stood in toward the Hook.

The watchers on the signal station now waited in breathless suspense.

The "Arapiles," with a prize crew from the other vessels to work her guns, was to be made to attack her former consort, the stranded "El Cid;" and that vessel, aware of her danger, was now firing rapidly at her approaching enemies.

It was not reserved, however, for the Chilians to complete their victory by the capture of the great ironclad.

The giant was to be killed by a pigmy scarce larger than one of his own huge weapons. A smaller steam-launch slowly crept out from the Staten Island shore. But two men could be seen on board of her--one in the bow, the other at the helm.

"They don't see us yet, Ned," said the man in the bow.

"No; they have all they can do to take care of the other fellows. Look out! Are you hurt?"

A shell from the Chilians just then came over the Hook, and, bursting under the water near the launch, deluged the boat with spray.

"Not a bit," said the other.

"Is your boom clear?"

"All clear."

Bang! A shot, this time from the Spaniard came skipping along the water in the direction of the launch, and flew over the heads of the daring pair.

"Hang them! They've seen us."

"Rig out your boom. We're in for it now!"

The man in the stern pushed shut the door of the boiler furnace, and turned on full steam.

The little craft fairly leaped ahead.

The two men set their teeth. He of the stern lashed the tiller amidships, and crept forward, aiding the other to push out the long boom which projected from the bow.

Ten seconds passed. Then the torpedo on the end of the boom struck the "El Cid" under the stern. There was a crash--a vast upheaval of water and fragments.

The great ironclad rolled over on her side and lay half submerged.

Of the two men who had done this, one swam ashore bearing the other, wounded to the death.

A mighty cheer arose from the Chilian fleet, repeated from the shore

with redoubled volume.

"El Cid" lay sullen and silent; two of her guns were pointing under water, two up to the clouds.

The "Arapiles" fired the last shell at her own admiral--now a corpse, torn to pieces by the torpedo.

Then some one scrambled along the deck of the wrecked monster and lowered the Spanish flag.

"I think we'll keep that money," remarked Grant, as he lit another cigar.

* * * *

The Chilian fleet had relieved New York. Elated by her victory over Peru, and thirsting for revenge against Spain for the latter's merciless bombardment of Valparaiso in 1866, the Chilians, as soon as they had learned of the declaration of war against the United States, tore up the treaty of truce and armistice made with Spain in 1871, and announced themselves an ally of this country. Realizing the weakness of our navy, and the unprotected position of our seaports, Chili instantly dispatched her three ironclads to New York. They made the voyage with remarkable celerity, stopping only for coal and provisions, and reached the beleaguered city just in the nick of time, as has already been detailed.

It was fortunate that the "Zaragoza" had been obliged to put so far out to sea that she could not return in season to take part in the conflict, otherwise the result might have been different.

As it was, when she came back a day later, and discovered the position of affairs, she took to her heels without delay.

It is not necessary here to speak of the greeting which the Chilians received, or the thanks which were lavished upon them by the people of the United States. Neither need we picture the dismay of the citizens of New York when they came to realize the fearful damage which had been inflicted upon their city. Fully one-half of the town lay in ruins. The metropolis was the metropolis no longer. The proudest city of the Great Republic had been at the mercy of a conqueror, and, as if this humiliation were not deep enough, she owed her preservation from utter destruction to the guns of an insignificant Republic of South America.

* * * *

Six months after the relief of the city, a Chilian sailor belonging to the "Huascar," which was lying off the Battery, stopped to watch a crowd of workmen who were busily engaged in clearing away the ruins of some

tenement buildings near Tompkins Square.

The face of one of the workmen had evidently attracted the foreigner's attention, as he gazed at him intently and curiously.

Suddenly there was a sharp detonation. The crowd scattered in all directions. An unexploded shell which had lodged in the building had been struck by a pick in the hands of one of the laborers, and had been fired.

The sailor helped carry out the dead.

Among the victims was the man at whom he had been so intently looking a moment before. This one he took in his arms and bore him apart from the rest.

Nervously he tore open the dead man's shirt. On the bared breast was a curiously shaped mole.

The sailor sank on his knees in prayer beside the body for a moment. Then he turned, and addressing an officer who, with a file of soldiers, had come upon the scene, and was directing the removal of the dead, he asked in broken English, pointing to the corpse:

"Will you give me this?"

"Why?"

"He was my brother-- _Leon Sangrado_."

The war had found a victim in him who had caused it.

Project Gutenberg's *Stories by American Authors, Volume 5*, by Various

Folk Tales and Fantasies is a Creative Commons Non-Commercial copyrighted project by Matt Pierard, 2018.